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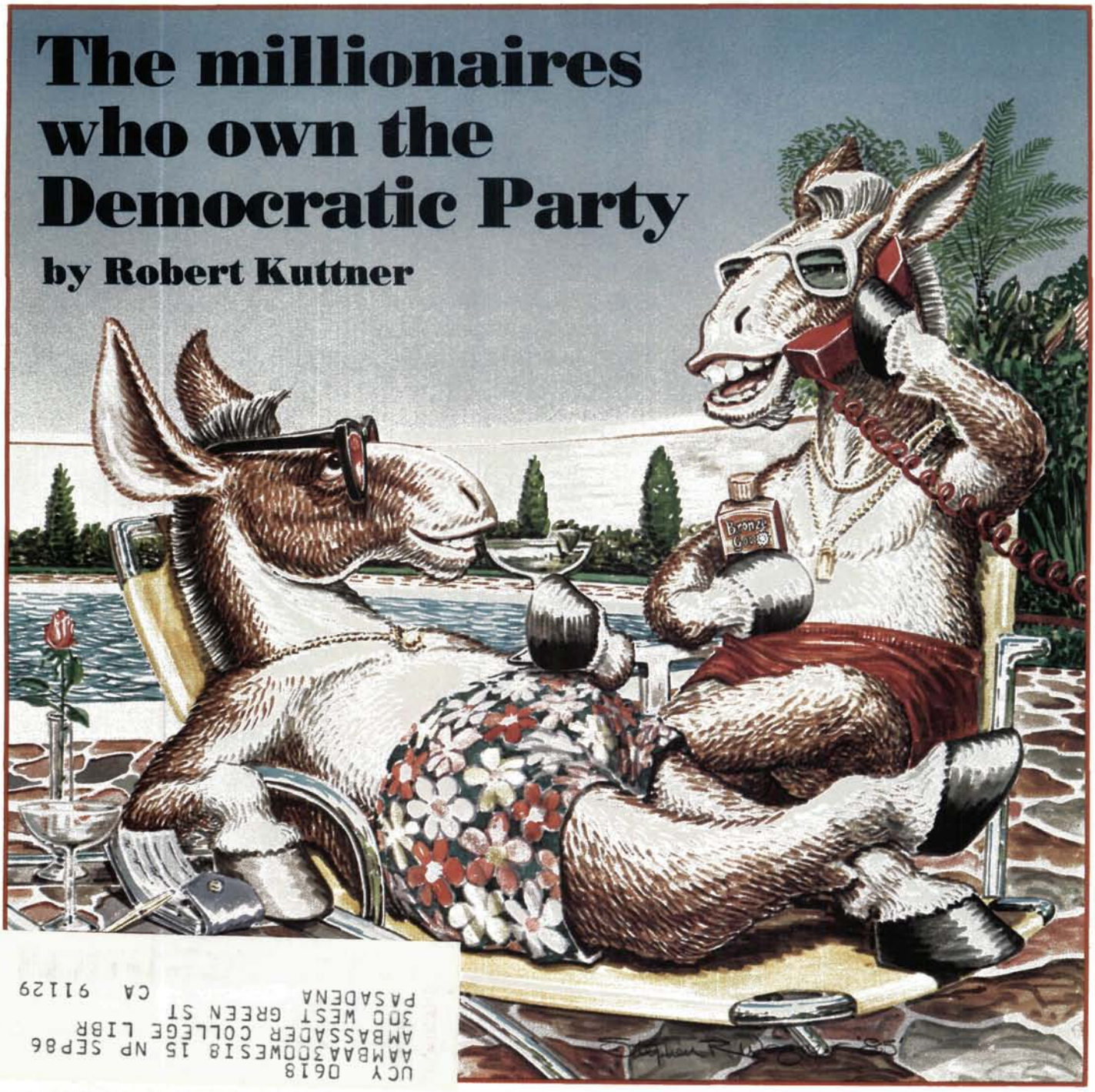
THE NEW REPUBLIC



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

FOUNDED 1914 — *A Weekly Journal of Opinion* — ISSUE 3,666

WASHINGTON, D.C. — APRIL 22, 1985

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 192, Number 16, Issue 3,666, April 22, 1985. (Printed on April 3, 1985.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 7 & 14, July 15 & 22, Aug. 12 & 19, and Sept. 16 & 23, 1985) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. Leadership Network advertising (212) 684-5500. Yearly subscriptions, $48; foreign, $73; Canada, $60. Back issues, $2.50 (includes postage & handling). ©1985 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Available on microfilm from University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and Bell & Howell, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, OH 44691. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. **Subscribers:** Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to **Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 355, Farmingdale, NY 11737-0001.** For subscription problems call **800-645-9559** (In N.Y. State call 800-732-9119).

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FROM WASHINGTON

THE $300 BILLION CAP

TRB's law of political scandals holds that when the newspapers zero in on something that's illegal, the real outrage tends to be what's perfectly legal. The question of conflicts of interest is a good example. In the Reagan era, the perversion of government policy by people trading on Washington influence and connections has reached new heights of brazenness. But since influence peddling is generally legal, this gets far less ink than somebody giving his mother-in-law a job.

Because of the conventions of objectivity, reporters naturally feel more comfortable when they can accuse someone of breaking the law. That is an objective standard of behavior. But what's illegal is fundamentally less important and less interesting than what's legal. After all, there will always be crooks and cheats. Dubious behavior that society chooses not to punish tells us something about society itself, and also suggests how society can be improved. Scandals that turn on questions of legality often get mired in trivia that make the whole matter seem ridiculous and cause public attention to wander off. Remember Ed Meese's cuff links?

This year's equivalent of those cuff links is a dog named Fursten, owned by an executive of General Dynamics, the nation's largest defense contractor. Fursten ran up a $155 tab at a dog kennel, and his master billed it to the government. General Dynamics has admitted this was wrong, and everyone has had a good laugh. But the defense contracting scandal is a perfect illustration of TRB's law. The real outrage isn't the companies that break the rules; it's the rules. Fursten was in the kennel because his master was attending a General Dynamics "quarterly review meeting" at a posh resort, for which the government was billed $100,000. That's legal.

So are billions of dollars of other inflated costs and absurd billings. To counteract all the recent bad publicity, the Defense Department has decided to stage a show trial of General Electric, the fourth largest defense contractor, for a piddling $800,000 time-card scam. But what's needed is a complete overhaul of defense contracting. And the secretary of defense seems to be too busy spending money to worry about how it's spent. Our problem isn't the $9,600 allen wrench. It's the $300 billion Cap.

The defense procurement problem has two parts. One is that most items, from the notorious coffee makers to missiles, are not bought for a set price the way you or I or Mrs. Weinberger buys things. Instead, the supplier submits its costs, adds a share of "overhead" and profit, and DOD sends a check. Even supposedly competitive contracts are only the beginning of a negotiating process that inevitably produces a higher bill. A lucrative subspecialty of Washington law devotes itself to such renegotiations.

Senator Charles Grassley asserts that only five percent of defense dollars are spent competitively. Grassley, of Iowa, is one of the troglodyte Republicans who came to the Senate on President Reagan's coattails in 1980. But he now favors a freeze in defense spending, asserting that this will force the military to become more efficient.

The second part of the problem is the definition of "overhead." This is where the flashy abuses come in. About half a million dollars were billed to the government over two years for flying the chairman of General Dynamics to his weekend house, and to the meetings of other corporate boards, in a corporate jet. (All these General Dynamics horrors come from the zealous coverage of G.D.'s hometown paper, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.) G.D.'s chairman, David Lewis, asserted that the private plane was necessary to protect him from terrorist attacks.

There are seemingly strict rules that forbid contractors from billing the government for things like entertainment, lobbying, and advertising. The sensible reason is that the government shouldn't have to pay the cost of having its own arm twisted to buy an airplane, especially if the airplane is already bought. But all the rules have their ambiguities and loopholes. What generally happens is that contractors put in for everything, then negotiate a compromise. This was about to happen with Chairman Lewis's plane trips when the story broke and G.D. tactfully decided to swallow the whole cost. Even when a contractor must pay money back, there is no interest charge. And there's no rush. DOD, having paid them, is still auditing General Dynamics's expenses from 1977.

The rule against billing advertising has an exception for ads recruiting personnel. By including some "equal opportunity employer" boilerplate, defense contractors have been able to charge the taxpayers for some of those large display ads—usually on a patriotic theme—you see in places such as *Time*, *The Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. The rules also make a distinction between "advertising" and "selling cost," which allows contractors to bill the government for displays at (and travel to and from) the famous Paris Air Show.

Under a regulation allowing contractors to charge for membership in "trade, business, technical and professional organizations," the taxpayers helped General Dynamics pay for a $100,000 contribution to the American Security Council Foundation, a defense lobbying group; for $45,000 to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the hawkish think tank; and—I love this—for $15,000 to the Grace Commission on government waste.

Senator Grassley, who is up for reelection next year, is staking a claim on this issue because he knows there are votes here. Surely, though, this is a natural issue for the Democrats. Nobody is going to be successfully accused of being a weakling for making a fuss about Pentagon waste. This issue appeals to the same legitimate resentments as the issue of corporations that don't pay any income tax (many of the leading defense contractors among them, by the way). And there is no evidence at all that Americans in general share Reagan and Weinberger's maniacal association of national strength with spending money.

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CORRESPONDENCE

STARRY EYES

To the editors:

Leon Wieseltier's essay on Star Wars ("Nuclear Idealism, Nuclear Realism," March 11) was cogent and levelheaded, but I found his dismissal of the "bargaining chip" argument unconvincing and reckless. He says: "If Star Wars works, it must not be a bargaining chip. If Star Wars doesn't work, it cannot be a bargaining chip. The bargaining chip argument, then, is a bit of a swindle." It is his corollary, which posits an infeasible system, that gives me pause. Consider the following line of argument, which I suggest is roughly analogous and equally flawed: if a used car is a peach, it must not be parted with. (True enough.) If a used car is a lemon, it cannot be unloaded on anyone. (Oh yeah?) As too many of us have found out the hard way, it ain't necessarily so. Can we not peddle this clunker to the Russians? Or at least extract a few concessions from them on its account? We should not be too quick to rule out SDI as a "bargaining chip" merely because of its dubious practicality. Given the technical uncertainty surrounding the project itself, Mr. Wieseltier's certainty about its political value—i.e., its market value—seems premature.

Surely the essential point, in the context of negotiations, is whether the Soviets actually see the project as potentially valuable, not whether they should do so. And, it is worth repeating, they have at least come back to the showroom, even if they are "just looking for now." Seems to me they are looking long and hard.

ROBERT W. MCCONKEY
Weston, Ontario

Leon Wieseltier replies:

No, it's not worth repeating. The Russians were hardly returned to the table by a horror of defenses, as any student of Soviet strategy knows. They were returned by the exquisite political opportunity that Star Wars presented to reverse their INF defeat. They properly perceived in Mr. Reagan's fancy a chance to prey upon NATO, whose European members are properly rattled by it. This is an ancient Russian aim for arms control talks.

A bargaining chip for what? For Soviet ICBMs? It is almost impossible to imagine a drastic Soviet disruption of either its arsenal or its military industries, as previous efforts prove; anyway American defenses impart a whole new importance to Soviet offenses. For Soviet ABMs? Well, maybe; but not if the Americans are there precisely to make the case for it.

O'CONNOR'S CONSCIENCE

To the editors:

Joseph Nocera's portrait of Archbishop John O'Connor ("John Paul's Disciple," March 18) is wildly out of proportion. O'Connor is a sincere and sensitive man. Just because he feels obligated to make strong public statements about principles he is conscience-bound to uphold does not make him hide-bound. Cardinal Bernadin's "seamless garment" approach to a human life ethic is palatable to many American Catholics and other Americans because it dissolves any pointed effort into a generalized concern. In short, they prefer a weak dialogue with the status quo. It's ironic that the very people who advocate a confrontation with American culture take O'Connor to task for doing just that.

O'Connor is the first archbishop of New York to have met with leaders of Catholic homosexual groups; Nocera notes this in passing, but does not elaborate further, apparently because this dialogue did not result in some sort of murky half-endorsement for homosexual life-styles. O'Connor's principled opposition to Executive Order 50 in New York has caused a stir not because of the church's condemnation of homosexual activity. Everyone already knew about that. It was his wish not to give a wrong public impression, a concern notably absent from many other members of the American hierarchy, that was really new. Up until that time, many Catholic bishops, in clear breach of their responsibilities, had more or less tacitly agreed not to notice certain things. O'Connor was willing to meet with people and talk; he was not willing to let the bare fact of dialogue obscure important matters.

Nocera is nowhere more wrong than in his characterization of O'Connor as having "shown more independence" when he changed his views on U.S. aid to the anti-Sandinistas fighting in Nicaragua. He was more independent last year when he thought such aid should not be criticized by the bishops as a body. What is so independent about embracing a position that is all but universal not only in the Catholic church but in the executive offices of every Christian denomination in the United States?

You can hold Nocera's view of independence only if you regard adherence to the teachings of the pope and the church or support for the policies of the Reagan administration as without question a case of either simple stupidity or *mauvaise foi*. The archbishop suffers from neither of these flaws and is quite capable of looking after himself in public debates. Nocera is way out of line in impugning the intelligence and the character of a good man with whom he happens to disagree.

ROBERT ROYAL
Arlington, Virginia

DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT

To the editors:

Although the article by Representative Charles Schumer and Alfred J. Watkins on the proportion of Latin American debt incurred because of interest payments ("Faustian Finance," March 11) was enlightening, its first proposal was a nonstarter. Depriving developing economies of continued capital flows by limiting banks' lending to cover interest payments will have devastating effects on development in these countries. Capital flows are necessary to grease the wheels of industry in Latin America as export income decreases due to subsiding world demand for imported goods. Unless output continues to grow, no income will be earned to improve conditions in these countries, or service external debt.

Certainly, the commercial banks are partly to blame for the present situation, but the roots of the debt problem are the overvalued dollar and protected markets in the developed countries. The highly valued dollar requires LDCs not to further development goals, but to increase exports and to raise more funds to finance their dollar debts. It has been difficult to raise export earnings because protectionist trade poli-

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
APRIL 22, 1985

CONSTRUCTIVE DISENGAGEMENT

The anti-apartheid movement both in and (mostly) out of South Africa seems to have made some progress over the past six months. In October Bishop Desmond Tutu received the Nobel Peace Prize. Since November an ongoing protest in front of South Africa's Washington embassy has received much media attention. And just a few weeks ago, government authorities allowed Ted Koppel's week-long "Nightline" investigation of apartheid to be broadcast on South African television. Symbol builds upon symbol in the fight against apartheid. But such events—important though they are—should not obscure the fact that there has been no real change in South Africa.

If anything, the situation continues to deteriorate. Since September more than 200 blacks have been killed by the police in demonstrations, and another 3,000 arrested. Black protests are becoming increasingly violent, one result of the recent crackdown and the continuing insult of apartheid. One million blacks have taken part in labor strikes and a school boycott. In a recent speech widely interpreted as a warning that a new round of banning and preventive detention is forthcoming, President P. W. Botha said he would take any steps necessary to maintain law and order. He took the first step by banning meetings by 29 opposition groups, including the United Democratic Front, an organization with 1.5 million members. In May the government will try 16 of the UDF's leaders on charges of treason.

Despite the violent state of unrest, Reagan administration officials still advocate the version of quiet diplomacy they call "constructive engagement," arguing they need more time to bring results. But what have four years of that policy brought? South African troops continue their siege of Namibia, conducting a brutal war against Swapo guerrillas in which many thousands have died. The much touted reform creating separate parliaments for Indians and "coloreds" is a sham: it granted them no legislative power, left the overwhelming majority of the population—blacks—without any representation, and effectively divided the already fractured opposition. The homelands resettlement drive, temporarily suspended, has forced half of the country's blacks onto overcrowded, unproductive Bantustans, where the infant mortality rate is the highest of the entire African continent. The daily humiliations of apartheid, from separate public facilities for non-whites to residential restrictions and passbook requirements, all continue. And still the refrain from the White House: "Give them time."

Well, it's time to discard constructive engagement and devise a new policy for South Africa. The foundation for this policy should be legislation now before the House drafted by Representatives Stephen Solarz and William Gray. The "Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985" would ban bank loans to the South African government, prohibit new investment to establish or finance American companies in South Africa, stop the sale of computers to the government, and make it illegal to import Krugerrand gold coins to the United States. The legislation can be lifted if apartheid is abolished. More realistically, it can be suspended

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for 12-month periods if both the president and Congress believe Pretoria is making substantive human rights advances.

The anti-apartheid act avoids the tough question of divestment. Many, including some blacks and liberals, have argued against divestment on the grounds that it would harm black workers more than it would the government. The Solarz-Gray bill, however, is aimed directly at the South African government. As Solarz argues, "No businesses will be closed and no jobs will be lost, but the government's ability to draw on American financial institutions to finance its apartheid programs or use American computers to enforce the pass laws will be halted."

The Solarz-Gray measures clearly would not have the kind of impact that divestment would, but they would impose real costs on the South African government. The sale of Krugerrands to the United States brings South Africa $350 million a year. Bank loans to Pretoria total $400 million annually. Ironically, only the provision banning new investments, a major stumbling block when the Senate balked at similar legislation last September, will have little real effect. Although some sectors, notably the construction industry, continue to invest heavily in South Africa (hence the Senate resistance), overall there has been an exodus of American capital from South Africa for several years.

THE SANCTIONS WOULD also end the moral cowardice that characterizes our current policy toward South Africa. Following the fatal shooting by police of 19 blacks in a funeral procession, President Reagan chastised the press for "ignoring the fact that there was rioting going on," and noted it was "significant that some of those enforcing the law and using the guns were also black policemen." In the president's determination to stand by this strategic ally, he has put himself in the repugnant position of blaming the victims for their own deaths. On the all too rare occasions when an administration official criticizes South Africa, Botha and Co. ignore the remarks, secure in their knowledge that business as usual between the two countries will prevail. Even if South Africa shrugs off the sanctions, at least the United States will have dissociated itself from apartheid.

Tutu's Nobel Prize, the embassy protests in Washington, and the new rash of violence in South Africa have made it more likely that anti-apartheid legislation will be approved in the coming weeks. There is little doubt about the bill's success in the House. Still, sponsors say they are not getting the support they thought they would from 35 conservative Republicans who several months ago signed a letter to Botha warning that they would endorse economic sanctions unless progress in South Africa could be demonstrated. The Republicans who were jumping on the anti-apartheid bandwagon last winter are now scrambling down.

In fact, Representative Bob Walker, one of the instigators of the Republicans' warning to Botha, is trying to torpedo the Solarz-Gray bill. Walker has introduced a scattershot bill that ignores the Solarz-Gray sanctions and requires only that American companies operating in South Africa adhere to the Sullivan Principles, a set of fair labor practice guidelines. Walker then drowns this mild anti-apartheid measure in a host of other provisions aimed mostly at communist countries. (For example, he would ban imports from nations that employ slave labor, and prohibit IMF loans to countries that support international terrorism and the drug trade.) According to a "Dear Colleague" distributed by Walker, he proposed the bill so Republicans would not lose the anti-apartheid issue to the Democrats. That's exactly the kind of petty partisanship we thought the Republicans had moved away from on South Africa when they signed the Botha letter.

In the Senate, the new climate may help change the minds of those who defeated anti-apartheid legislation last year. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee recently voted to impose sanctions (almost identical to those that Solarz proposes) within two years unless steps are taken by the Botha government to renounce apartheid. We see no reason to wait two years. But the bill at least makes a compromise between the House and Senate positions more likely, and thus brings congressional repudiation of constructive engagement one step closer. It's about time.

WHEN IS A CONTRA NOT A CONTRA?

The Reagan administration is very big on freedom fighters these days. For that reason, its opposition to military assistance for the Cambodian rebels who are fighting the Vietnamese occupation of their country is a particularly noteworthy bit of hypocrisy. We don't refer to the Khmer Rouge. It's understandable that American officials would wish to limit the extent of what is already a sufficiently grotesque relationship with the last decade's most accomplished butchers. What is proposed by the House Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, at the instigation of Representative Stephen Solarz, is rather a mere five million dollars to be channeled through the government of Thailand to the forces of Son Sann, former prime minster of Cambodia and a state-of-the-art democratic nationalist, and the indefatigable Prince Sihanouk. Five million is not enough to defeat the Vietnamese occupation, to be sure. Still, it will provide as much as 30 percent of the rebels' needs, and will be quite enough to keep the pressure on. Sort of like the *contras*, you might say. (Except, of course, that the *contras* of Cambodia are fighting to oust a foreign occupier, which should free them at least from some of the controversy that surrounds the *contras* of Nicaragua. They are more like the *mujahadeen* of Afghanistan.)

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But it appears, alas, that for the Reagan administration there are *contras* and there are *contras*. In the Cambodian case the administration is relying upon a series of casuistic cop-outs: that it doubts that Congress can be relied upon to be constant with its assistance; that it is wary of "Americanizing" the conflict; that some of the aid will end up in the dirty hands of the Khmer Rouge. All of this, of course, can be claimed about the Nicaraguan case as well. (There are dirty hands along the Honduran border, too.) We urge the Reagan people to honor their hoarsely protested principles and support this financially modest but symbolically significant appropriation. These are democratic, anti-communist forces of the sort that the United States was put on this planet to help. Indeed, they are, more precisely than the rebels of Nicaragua, what Ronald Reagan calls "freedom fighters." But look who's come down with post-Vietnam syndrome.

NOTEBOOK

□ POST WASTE: No good liberal wants to dwell on the Democratic debacles of 1980 or 1984, but *The Washington Post* has taken things too far. On March 23, *Post* reporter Kathy Sawyer referred to a certain Democratic former vice president and presidential candidate as "liberal former Senator Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn.)." We are waiting in anticipation for a mention of "former Georgia state legislator James E. Carter," and looking forward to the day when "retired actor Ronald Reagan" puts in his appearance as well.

□ THE COURAGE TO DISCARD: Ted Kennedy isn't dwelling on the past, either. "Kennedy Challenges Party to Change," read the *Post* headline on March 30 heralding Kennedy's first speech of the 1988 campaign. Subhead: "Speech Nudges Democrats Toward the Political Center." In his speech (to a symposium, sigh, on the presidency of John F. Kennedy) Senator Edward Kennedy scolded, "We cannot and should not depend on higher tax revenues to roll in and redeem every costly program." Democrats, he said, must learn to "do more with less" and show "the courage to discard." And so on. The Kennedys are famous for reinventing themselves at will, but all this is a bit brazen, even from a Kennedy. Does this man have any thoughts of his own at all? Is there any trend he won't attempt to co-opt? Critics who have portrayed Kennedy as the last of the big-spending left-liberals always had it wrong, in our view. Sure, that was his pose in 1980. By 1982 he'd developed an apparently obsessive concern for nuclear weapons. More recently, it was South Africa. Now it's economic growth. Oh yes, and tax reform. (The current system, it seems, is "a code of babel.") Kennedy is right that the Demo-

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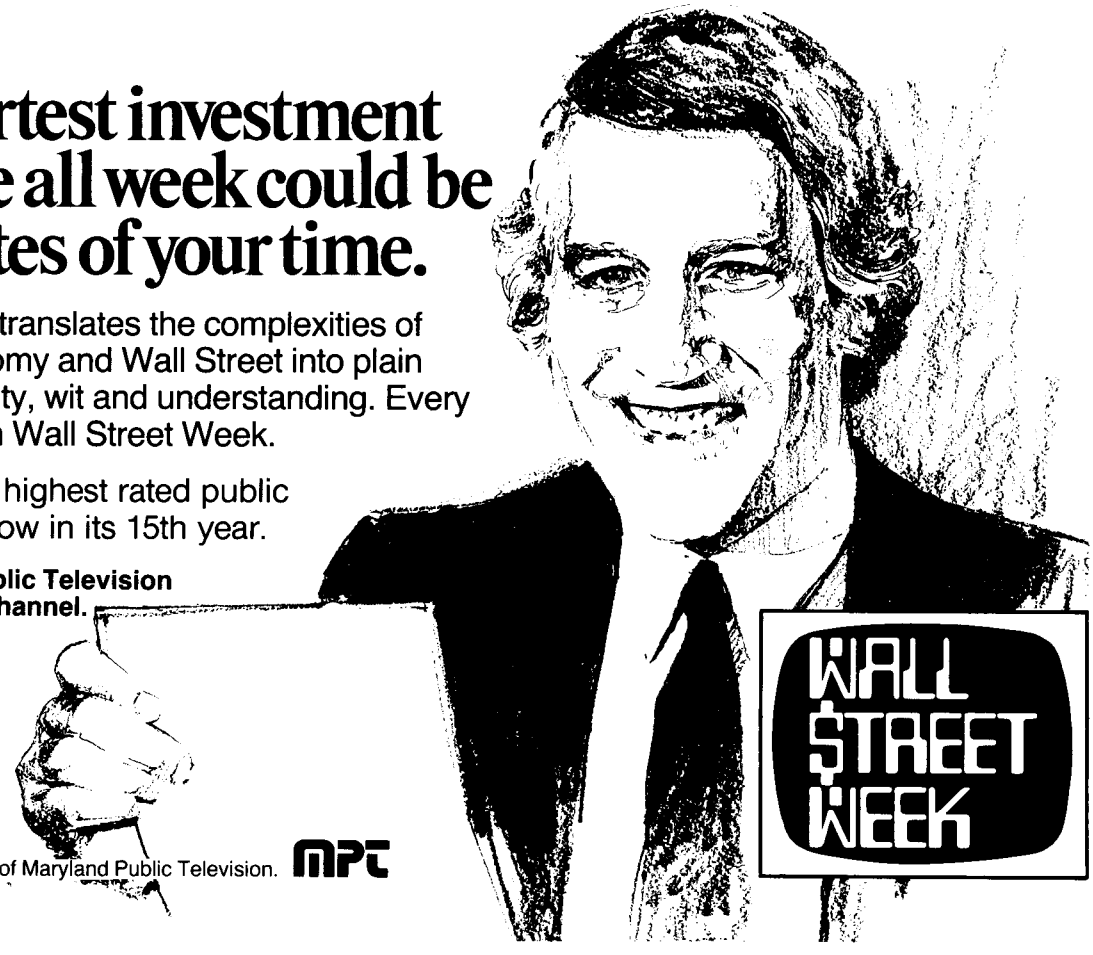

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crats need the courage to discard. We know where they should start.

□ BUT FOR THOSE who do like to dwell in the past, the Easton Press of Norwalk, Connecticut, is offering "The Library of the Presidents," described in a mailing as "one of the most important events in American publishing history." For only $33.50 a volume (plus shipping and handling), you can get a series of volumes celebrating America's presidents, each one "fully bound in *real leather*" and "decorated with precious 22kt gold." What makes this project different from the usual Franklin Mint-style scheme is that the series includes the memoirs of former presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter, "personally-signed" [sic] by the authors! "All three of America's living former Presidents have recognized the historic importance of this collection," explains the lavish color brochure, "and all three have consented to sign their memoirs for each subscriber. . . ." Somehow we doubt that history was uppermost in their minds when the former presidents agreed to this deal. We have become pretty inured to the selling of the ex-presidents in recent years, but this is the trashiest example yet. Even Michael Jackson doesn't charge for his autograph.

□ JUSTICE FOR ALL: More than 1,500 people have been arrested since November for protesting apartheid in front of the South African Embassy in Washington. But none will be prosecuted following a decision by U.S. Attorney Joseph E. diGenova that bringing their cases to trial would only clog the courts. That irks the Washington Legal Foundation, a conservative public interest law firm that is defending a Cambodian woman who is being prosecuted for demonstrating outside the Soviet Embassy. A Foundation spokesman told *The Washington Post* that its client and the South Africa protestors were doing "exactly the same thing," yet were being treated differently by the courts. The complaint is valid, but ignores a central irony: the anti-apartheid group *wants* to be prosecuted so its members can argue against South Africa in court. Clearly the only way for both sides to get their wish is to switch embassies.

□ TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO IN THE NEW REPUBLIC: "The make-or-break Wisconsin primary has come and gone leaving in its wake unfulfilled predictions, unanswered questions and conflicting claims. Republicans expressed satisfaction that Nixon polled 30 percent of the vote without entering the state, but were clearly disappointed that he ran last. Democrats expressed gratification that Senators Kennedy and Humphrey won 70 percent of all votes cast, but were nervous about the potentially divisive religious issue. Senator Kennedy expressed pleasure at having won 56 percent of the Democratic vote and 6 of the 10 Congressional districts, but was not entirely happy about the character and margin of his victory. Only Senator Humphrey said he was unqualifiedly pleased." ("Wisconsin: The Primary That Nobody Won" by Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, April 18, 1960.)

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

TAX REFORM PROSPECTS

IT HAS HAPPENED time and again at the White House in recent months. Speech writers draft a populist-sounding address on economics for President Reagan, one with a visionary section on tax reform in which he endorses a boost in the personal exemption to $2,000 per person, child, or adult from this year's $1,040 ($1,000 plus $40 of inflation indexing). This would amount to a huge tax cut for low-income people. Such a speech would put Reagan on record in favor of one of the most politically attractive items in the tax reform and simplification plan proposed by his Treasury Department last fall. And it would appeal the most to precisely the groups the Republicans are courting in their bid for to become the nation's majority party: poor families, blue-collar workers, the lower middle class, Catholics, even blacks.

Only the president never delivers this stirring call for doubling the personal exemption. It is always excised from the text before it reaches the Oval Office. This happened, for instance, with the State of the Union address in February, when Reagan was left with merely a pitch for "increasing significantly" the personal exemption. Why isn't Reagan being allowed to come out for doubling the personal exemption? Answer: the personal exemption has become putty in the hands of Reagan's tax reformers. In packaging a compromise tax reform bill, Treasury and White House officials need to appease an angry horde of business interests. To the extent that these interests are accommodated, the personal exemption will have to be reduced from $2,000 to keep the whole proposal "revenue-neutral."

Such trade-offs are common in Washington—entrenched interests gain at the public's expense—but this one is different because Republicans have so much riding on tax reform. Reagan has brought the GOP to parity with the Democratic Party in the opinion polls, and tax reform could carry Republicans into the promised land of majority status. How so? By dispelling the idea that Republicans represent the rich, the well-connected, the country club set, and no one else. Tax reform would show that Republicans are willing to shift the burden of taxation dramatically from individuals, particularly the poor and barely middle class, to corporations (undoing precisely the opposite shift that took place during Reagan's first term).

The Reagan crowd is being pressured by its corporate friends, who don't like Treasury's first version of tax reform (known in Washington as Treasury I). They want the second, and presumably final, version expected in May (Treasury II) to preserve many tax breaks that Treasury I would eliminate. It would be easy to accommodate them, and quite in keeping with normal Republican practice. And the money is available. For every $100 that is lopped

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off the personal exemption, five billion dollars in tax benefits can be ladled out to business.

Lowering the exemption from $2,000 to $1,800, for example, would produce more than enough money to restore all the write-offs that the oil and gas industries would lose in Treasury I: percentage depletion allowance, intangible drilling costs deduction, and so on. Dropping it further from $1,800 to $1,200 would just about allow the investment tax credit to be kept in its controversial entirety. Or (since pressure to save the ITC has not been overwhelming) lowering the personal exemption from $1,800 back down to $1,000 would be just about enough to save the accelerated depreciation rules for plants and equipment that were initiated in Reagan's 1981 tax act. And what would be lost, since corporate America would be happy and the personal exemption would stay where it is in current law?

The opportunity for realignment would be lost. Without a doubling of the personal exemption or something close to it, the proposal becomes upper-middle-class tax reform; the proposed drop in the top tax rate from 50 percent to 35 percent helps the well-off, but there is no accompanying help for Archie Bunker and his family. The populist appeal is gone. And everyone's perception of Republicans as ready, in a pinch, to side with big business and the wealthy would be confirmed.

The administration is prepared to restore some of the tax breaks for the oil industry that Treasury I would eliminate. The administration also wants to make the treatment of capital gains more advantageous for many industries than in Treasury I. But the real test will be depreciation. High-tax corporations such as Proctor & Gamble and IBM aren't too concerned about this; trimming the corporate rate from 46 percent to 33 percent, as Treasury I does, will help them more than less generous depreciation will hurt. But Reagan's depreciation rules have allowed many corporations to pay little or no taxes. They won't give up this pleasure willingly, and they have many friends in the White House and Treasury who regard the business community as a crucial and not-to-be-antagonized segment of Reagan's governing coalition.

REPRESENTATIVE Jack Kemp, an enthusiastic tax reform advocate, is bent on doubling the personal exemption. "We have not yet done anything to help low-income people to the extent we should," he says. "We didn't do it in 1981." If the personal exemption had kept up with inflation since 1948, when it was $600, Kemp points out, "it would be more like $2,500 today." (Actually, it would be $2,633.) But Kemp wants to retain some measure of accelerated depreciation and favored treatment of capital gains. He is vague about where the revenue would come from, since he also wants a lower top rate than the 35 percent proposed in Treasury I.

Treasury Secretary James Baker and his chief adviser, Richard Darman, can't be vague. They have to come up with a bill, Treasury II, by mid-May, a tax package that not only Kemp and the top Democratic tax reformers, Senator Bill Bradley and Representative Richard Gephardt, will endorse, but one that Representative Dan Rostenkowski, the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and Senator Robert Packwood, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, will support as well. Rostenkowski appears to be no impediment, but Packwood's committee is more amenable to business lobbyists than any in Congress. And Packwood himself, who is up for reelection next year, is obligated to protect the timber industry, which is important in his home state of Oregon. That industry enjoys huge capital-gains special breaks that Treasury I would eliminate.

Will Baker and Darman capitulate to business? Maybe, but maybe not. Both are shrewd politicians; a senior official at the White House refers them as "Machiavelli and Cardinal Richelieu." They are willing to make changes in Treasury I, but not sweeping ones. They would restore the deductibility of most charitable contributions; retain health insurance as a largely untaxed fringe benefit; yield what one official calls "a little" on oil and gas, capital gains, and depreciation write-offs; and lower the top rate for individuals to 34 percent or less. (Why 34? Because Reagan said in the State of the Union address that he wanted it to be less than 35 percent.) But Baker and Darman are not committed to a $2,000 personal exemption, only to what the official characterizes as a "substantial, major increase. It will go up to a lot more than $1,500 and closer to $2,000." Baker and Darman are reconciled to having, even eager to have, some business opposition to Treasury II, for political reasons. They know that it will have to have "a populist drive as its principal driving force," the official says.

ANYTHING ELSE will bring on the wrath of Donald Regan, the White House chief of staff. Treasury I, remember, was drafted when he was treasury secretary, and he remains an enthusiast for the measure, especially the $2,000 exemption. Though supposedly lacking in political skill, Regan has a sophisticated view of tax reform as a realigning issue. Doubling the exemption "takes the whole issue away from the Democrats," says a White House official who reflects Regan's view. "It becomes a Republican issue. But if we give that up, we give up the whole guts of it." Without the $2,000 personal exemption to remove millions of poor people from the tax rolls and slash the tax payments of millions of the near-poor and middle class, tax reform has no political value, Regan believes. Once the head of Merrill Lynch and renowned for marketing clever tax avoidance schemes for the wealthy, Regan is hardly a man of the people. But he has figured out the politics of tax reform, and any reduction from a $2,000 exemption will have trouble getting past him.

The biggest reason for keeping the exemption at $2,000, though, is fear of the Democratic response if it is reduced significantly. Tax reform traditionally has been part of the liberal Democratic agenda, and Democrats would love to

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have it back. Presidents Kennedy and Carter both came to Washington talking fervently about it, though the talk came to nothing. Republicans captured the issue only when Reagan and Regan appropriated it as a way to lower rates and increase the party faithful. "The danger is that the Democrats could, at the last minute, leap in and double the exemption and take the credit," says Jeffrey Bell, deputy director of Lew Lehrman's group, Citizens for America. Regan agrees with Bell. Tax reform is a Republican issue for now, and a potentially realigning one. But if the business lobbyists prevail, all bets are off.

FRED BARNES

POSTCARD MOSCOW

ST. LENIN

APRIL 22 is the 115th anniversary of the birth of the founder of the Soviet Union, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, who called himself Lenin. In Moscow the occasion is observed with surprising restraint, given the state's quotidian deification of the man. There are newspaper articles, meetings, and speeches in his honor—small stuff compared to the ostentatious celebrations of May Day and Revolution Day. Nevertheless, the cult of Lenin thrives. As one of Moscow's many billboards proclaims, "Lenin is More Alive Than All the Living!"

One way the Soviets manifest Lenin's immortality is through his tomb. His embalmed body is displayed in a magisterial mausoleum just outside the Kremlin wall. Four days a week people are permitted to view the body. One must wait in line for two hours or more, directed by brusque police and KGB guards not to smile or laugh, to tuck in stray shirttails, to remove one's hat and one's hands from one's pockets—to observe a decorum that is observed nowhere else in Moscow.

The mausoleum, a squat square-topped pyramid of black and reddish stone, was inspired in part by the mausoleum of Tamerlane. According to a book by Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives!*, the idea of embalming the revered leader may have come from the discovery in Luxor, 15 months before Lenin's death, of the tomb of Tutankhamen. More influential still was the Russian Orthodox tradition of making relics of its saints, connected with the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh, which holds that if a body does not decay after death it is that of a saint. Shortly after Lenin's death in 1924, the scientist responsible for the embalming remarked proudly, "The Russian Church had claimed that it was a miracle that its saints' bodies endured and were incorruptible. But we have performed a feat unknown to modern science. . . . We worked four months and we used certain chemicals known to science. There is nothing miraculous about it." Science could now do for a secular saint what God once did.

The immediate interior of the mausoleum is a dim chamber of black marble; one follows a dark stairway down into the inner crypt, at the center of which sits a glass-lidded sarcophagus. Lenin's form—or as many believe, a likeness—is bathed in roseate light. The expression on his face is pained, or perhaps concerned. His right hand is clenched in a loose fist at his side, his left hand extended. At every step there is a guard bearing a gun. One departs a bit dazed by the political kitsch of it all.

Outside the monument are buried some of the renowned figures of the Soviet Union and international communism. Like the czars before them, the leaders of the nation—from Stalin (who, from 1953 to 1961, lay embalmed beside Lenin within the mausoleum) to Andropov—are buried in the ground. Never is a leader cremated. Lesser dignitaries are, however; they are placed in urns in the Kremlin wall. (Those of a still less exalted rank, such as the deposed Nikita Khrushchev, are immured in the Novodevichy cemetery on the outskirts of Moscow.)

Symbolism breeds symbolism, and Westerners often find it irresistible. In 1940 the poet Robert Service published "The Ballad of Lenin's Tomb," which read in part:

> They tell you he's a mummy—don't you make
> that bright mistake.
> I tell you—he's a dummy; aye, a fiction and
> a fake.

Writing in a rather more earnest vein, in the British journal *Encounter*, the philosopher Leszek Kolakowski concluded a recent essay on the "collapse of the Soviet empire" with the reflection, "It might turn out one day that Lenin's mummy in the Kremlin mausoleum is in fact made of wax." This prompted one reader to write in with a tale about an alleged attack on Lenin's sarcophagus by Estonian dissidents in early 1980, resulting in the lopping off of Lenin's nose.

DURING A RECENT visit to Moscow I walked to Red Square very early one morning. Several inches of snow had fallen overnight. Even at this hour there was a small throng of Russians standing before Lenin's mausoleum, dodging the trucks outfitted with snow shovels barreling around the square at top speed. Some of the people appeared to be peasants from the provinces, some were tourists, and some seemed to have nothing better to do. They had come to watch the changing of the guard, which takes place every hour precisely on the hour. The entrance to the mausoleum is guarded round the clock by two young soldiers who stand rigid and unblinking.

Atop the mausoleum an old woman, dressed in a dark-gray work uniform, was sweeping the snow from the ledges and pilasters with a broom made of birch twigs. Gradually she worked her way to the front of the sepulcher, where Lenin's name is inscribed in large block letters. Directly below her stood the two guards in fine gray coats and caracul hats, their faces flushed with cold. As the Kremlin bell tower struck the hour, the two were

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relieved by two others, with mechanical precision. Oblivious to the ritual—or perhaps taking a secret pleasure in some irreverence—the *babushka* continued to whisk the snow, which landed squarely on the guards' high Slavic cheekbones. The guards endured the torrent solemnly, without flinching, and the crowd laughed delightedly.

JOSEPH FINDER

Joseph Finder is the author of *Red Carpet* (New Republic Books/Holt, Rinehart & Winston).

Upward mobility in Iowa.

MAHARISHI U

FAIRFIELD, IOWA, in the heart of Iowa farm country, is a town out of Norman Rockwell. On the right as you drive west through town is a tidy square with a band shell. On warm summer nights, the local band plays Sousa marches for the townspeople. If it rains, they sit in the cabs of their pickup trucks parked around the square and honk their appreciation. The main street is populated with a J.C. Penney, a granite bank, a pizza parlor, and a few bars and laundromats. But as you drive out a few blocks, over the railroad tracks, you'll see the former campus of Parson College, now dominated by two gold-roofed domes that look eerily like flying saucers: the Golden Domes of Pure Knowledge at Maharishi International University, which moved in when Parsons lost its accreditation in 1973.

I was in Fairfield to attend the second Global Taste of Utopia. The first had attracted nearly 7,000 meditators, and the university's press releases made some extraordinary claims. Just by gathering in the Golden Domes of Pure Knowledge, the meditators were said to have conjured up enough benevolent energy to influence the stock market (the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose sharply during the conference), decrease traffic fatalities, lower the incidence of crime, and prompt conciliatory gestures by governments notorious for human rights violations. During the three-week conference, South Korea announced plans to release more than 1,600 prisoners; officers held in a suspected coup attempt in Zimbabwe were released. When I heard there was to be a follow-up conference last summer, I signed up immediately. This I had to see.

I had read *The Relaxation Response*, Herbert Benson's best-selling book on TM, and I was familiar with the claims it made. No monkish isolation or intensive study was required; for just $400 and a few hours of your time, you could learn how to live a harmonious life. In *The TM Program: The Way to Fulfillment*, a popular manual in the seventies, Philip Goldberg claimed that TM offered "rejuvenation to mind and body, greater energy, clarity of thinking, efficiency in action, tranquility, and other benefits that are widely known." Millions had learned to meditate. But it wasn't until I got to Fairfield that I discovered TM has become a way of life.

THE MEDITATORS convened in Fairfield were members of the TM-Sidhi program, trained by His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the Maharishi Technology of the Unified Field. When these Sidhas, or advanced teachers, gather to meditate, the Maharishi claims, they achieve harmony with "the unified field of natural law"—the basis of Transcendental Meditation. In the same way that TM "generates coherence" in the individual, collective meditation generates coherence in the world. Today there are TM communities in Washington, D.C.; in Seelisberg, Switzerland, home of the Maharishi European Research University; in Warwickshire, England; and in Fairfield, where some 5,000 Sidhas have established residence.

Advanced meditators belong to a variety of professions. They wear no exotic dress; they practice no curious rituals. The Sidhas I encountered in Fairfield were typical baby boomers and Yuppies. There are stock brokers, investment counselors, and securities traders with credentials from the biggest firms on Wall Street; veterans of the high-powered Boston Consulting Group; financial analysts from Dean Witter Reynolds and E. F. Hutton. "Executive Search Booms in Fairfield," reads a headline in *The Fairfield Source*. Just off the town square is an office of the New York Stock Exchange. There are 22 Sidha millionaires in town.

A national Chamber of Prosperity and Progress assists meditators who move their businesses to Fairfield, advising them on tax benefits and the availability of government grants. *The Business Book*, "the complete business directory for meditators living in Fairfield," lists dry cleaners, florists, plumbers, real estate agents—everything from accountants to woodworking. The Ayurmedical Center offers "individually prescribed programs for promotion of ideal health, integrating modern medical and Ayurvedic principles." There's the Downunder Deva Daycare Center and a Sunshine Transportation Service that supplies airline reservations "for the full sunshine of the Age of Enlightenment." And there's an Age of Enlightenment school, both primary and secondary; children begin meditating at the age of six.

The wares displayed in the big tent on campus took me back to the Woodstock era: health food, homemade jewelry, candles, and incense were much in evidence. One booth advertised Perfect Health Products, another Natural Cosmetics. But these are of archaeological significance only—vestiges of an extinct counterculture. Gone are the long hair, the dope, the Army-Navy store garb, the latest Stones album blasting through the dorm. MIU has a strict dress code: male teachers are required to wear coats and ties and to keep their hair trimmed reasonably short. The Tetra Building in downtown Fairfield contains designer clothing shops, offices for doctors and architects, and the First Age of Enlightenment Credit Union. Driving me around the grounds of Heartland, billed as "Fairfield's

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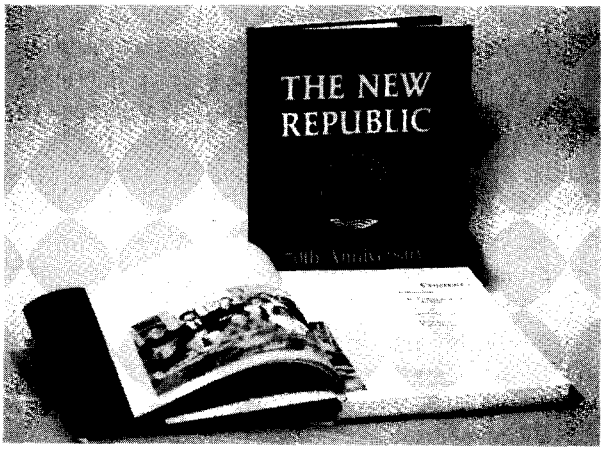

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first totally planned community," Richard Schneider, MIU's director of public affairs, pointed out the power lines, the plots of land, the new roads carved out of the barren hills. Just another suburban housing development, with a geodesic dome on the horizon.

In the science labs, giant EEG machines have been installed to test brain waves and monitor physiological changes induced by meditation. I was introduced there to Dr. David Orme-Johnson, chairman of the MIU psychology department and a co-editor of the four-volume *Scientific Research on the Transcendental Meditation Program*. Dr. Orme-Johnson, a Columbia graduate with a doctorate from the University of Maryland, was one of the authors of the original prospectus for the university. He did his Ph.D. on the effects of TM on a group of prisoners at a penitentiary near El Paso, Texas, exposing meditators and non-meditators to loud decibels and measuring the physiological response. "What we discovered was that TM makes the autonomic nervous system more stable," he said. "The subjects who learned meditation were measurably less aggressive, less tense."

Charles (Skip) Alexander, a Harvard Ph.D. in developmental psychology, corroborated Dr. Orme-Johnson's findings. His doctoral dissertation studied inmates at Walpole State Prison who had been taught TM. Within a year, the recidivism rate dropped 33 percent; the number of murders dropped from seven to none; and those prisoners who meditated were shown to be as high in "ego development" as Harvard undergraduates. "What we were witnessing was the field effect," Dr. Alexander said. "At Walpole, just a few people meditating improved the whole environment."

Polite, mild-mannered, calm, the two psychologists explained themselves with patience, even gaiety. "We can solve the world's problems," Dr. Alexander insisted, citing an experiment in which a group of meditators traveled to the Middle East at the height of the Lebanese conflict and meditated in hotel rooms. Just being near the turmoil around them, Alexander claimed, produced "increased positivity. The Israeli government confirmed our data."

EVERY MEDITATOR cited the same statistics: the lowered crime rate; the "increased positivity" in the world affairs that occurred during the Taste of Utopia assemblies; the rise in the stock market. I was repeatedly told that the Super-Radiance Effect was "like lighting a lamp in a dark room"; the mind was "like an ocean"; the world was "like a garden about to flower." Everyone told me about the *charm* of TM—the charm of meditation, of the mind in a state of higher consciousness, of our becalmed natures when we meditate. I asked a group of teachers in the Annapurna Dining Hall if any of them ever had doubts about TM. They shook their heads. Were they ever unhappy now? "Not really," one said. They laughed.

The experience of group meditation is so intense that Sidhas claim they can actually levitate, or "fly." "In the flying technique," according to TM brochures, "at the

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moment of maximum coherence, the body lifts up and begins to hop (the first stage of flying). Simultaneously, the subjective experience is one of waves of exhilaration. In this way the flying technique accelerates evolution to enlightenment—the state of fulfillment free from suffering and problems." Illustrating the text are photographs of meditators sitting cross-legged in midair.

I had hoped to witness this phenomenon, but Richard Schneider explained that no reporters have been allowed in the domes during meditation since a CBS camera team filmed a session, then got an Olympic gymnast to perform the same feat. "They created a circus atmosphere," he complained. One thing I noticed about the photographs was that the Sidhas' hair was flying around, as if they were bouncing on a trampoline. "Do they really leave the ground?" I asked. "Very briefly," Schneider replied. "We're still in the hopping stage."

Sidhas meditate for two hours twice a day—early in the morning and late in the afternoon. I had time on my hands, so I walked into town. Most of the stores were closed and traffic around the square was light. I headed over to Spud's for an early supper. There were some farmers in overalls at the bar, and women in pedal pushers. I sat in a booth and tried to read the MIU catalog in the dark. Every course was taught according to the principles of TM. "Mathematics for Neuroscientists" explored "the infinite dynamism of the unified field at each point in creation using the derivative." BUS 320, "Principles of Economics," covered supply and demand, market elasticity, fiscal and monetary policy within the context of SCI (the Science of Creative Intelligence), in order to provide "a practical means for achieving happiness within oneself, the basis for enjoyment of all external abundance." Lit 347, "Victorian Literature," proposed to show through the study of Charlotte Brontë, Tennyson, Dickens, George Eliot, and others "how great minds are spurred towards spiritual progress even when they see the decline of alliance with natural law in their own society." So George Eliot anticipated TM. I'd have to reread *Middlemarch* again.

AFTER DINNER I drove over to the home of Stuart Zimmerman, a trustee of MIU and president of the Zimmerman Family Partnership, a local investment firm. It was a spartan campus apartment, but expensively furnished within: modular couches, plush carpeting, track lights. Zimmerman's Hawaiian wife, Moki, served us ice cream and milk. "Great milk," John Lass, a consultant in the firm commented. "It's from our own cows," Zimmerman said proudly. His offices are on a farm a few miles out of town.

The firm has obviously done well. Zimmerman owns a private jet, and has attracted an impressive group of investment counselors to his firm. Lass, a Baker Scholar at the Harvard Business School, worked for the Boston Consulting Group before Zimmerman lured him out to Iowa. William Elkus, another BCG alumnus, attended the MIT Business School and Harvard Law. Douglass White, a linguistic engineer with a Ph.D. in Far Eastern languages from Harvard, is at work on a computer program for the text-processing of ideogrammatic languages that his firm, Global Integrated Technologies, hopes to have on the market by the end of the year.

I asked Zimmerman and his colleagues why they had moved to Fairfield. "I was drawn to the community—the idea of being part of a very large social experiment," Elkus said. "I found that I could actually accomplish more in a calm and tranquil environment." John Lass liked the idea of bringing up children in a town virtually devoid of crime, and where they could attend the local TM school. Being so far from Wall Street was a problem, he conceded, but the benefits of TM more than compensate for his isolation. "I have more physical energy and mental clarity now, and that's given me a competitive advantage."

Driving back to my lonely room at the Dream Motel in a thunderstorm that night, I couldn't help envying the serenity of these Sidhas. Meditating beneath the Golden Domes, they had found inner peace, discharged the social responsibilities they had inherited from the sixties, and enriched themselves into the bargain. "I wanted to make money in a good way," William Elkus explained, "to work for people who were doing good in the world." By helping yourself, you were helping others. A spiritual trickle-down effect—the perfect religion for America in the eighties.

JAMES ATLAS

James Atlas is a contributing editor of *Vanity Fair* who can't remember his mantra.

Financial advice for Jeane Kirkpatrick.

THE EMINENCE TRADE

WHEN Jeane Kirkpatrick announced that she was leaving government to go back to the classroom, it was easy to imagine what sort of public figure she meant to become. There's a prototype for elder statesmen: teaching duties at a prestigious university; membership in a couple of scholarly centers; articles, books, and an occasional Op-Ed piece. It sounds like a quiet life, and you'd never guess that it's likely to bring her a million or so a year for as long as she cares to keep her name known. In contrast to run-of-the-mill government officials who leave office to peddle their connections through the law, the lobby, or the consulting firm, the Jeane Kirkpatricks offer something more direct: eminence for sale.

Corporations and trade associations have joined universities in the quest for the speaker "who can fill up a room by the mere mention of the name," says the vice president of a leading lecture agency. Advice in other forms—corpo-

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rate boardships, rarefied consultancies, syndicated columns—sells just as briskly. Chief executive officers of 60 multinational corporations will pay $4,500 a head this spring, as they do every year, to catch a glimpse of Kirkpatrick and other eminences (Kissinger, Ford, and six other former heads of state) at the American Enterprise Institute's Vail World Forum, an annual two-and-a-half-day event where former heads of state and other big names discuss weighty issues off-the-record. They'll pay to hear her at any number of other forums and lunches. The elusive quality that drives this market is wisdom—or its nearest substitutes. People with foreign policy experience are somehow perceived as "having more understanding of the kind of world we live in nowadays," says a vice president of an international head-hunting firm. The eminence boom suggests that even CEOs of multinational corporations find life confusing and long for a quick fix of wisdom. Being busy people, they settle for prestige.

THE PROFESSIONAL offers made to Jeane Kirkpatrick over the past few weeks suggest one paradigm of lucrative life-after-government that is available to a select few. If Kirkpatrick follows the example of the eminence club's charter member, Henry Kissinger, and takes the advice of those in the businesses that buy eminence these days, the only trick she'll have to learn is how to conserve her aura, replenishing it faster than visibility can wear it down. The rest should happen by itself.

The stump. (Maximum conceivable take: $1.5 million a year. Maximum recorded take: $500,000 for 40 speeches, by Henry Kissinger in 1983.) The news that Kirkpatrick was leaving government prompted a brief but fierce bidding war among the booking agencies. Speakers' bureaus, which take a 20 percent to 40 percent commission, stand to earn quite a lot of money by representing one of the fairly small group of speakers who command fees of $15,000 and more for each appearance. And prices are rising: a big name today might get as much as $30,000. Demand is rising too, at a rate of 18 percent a year. Don Walker of Harry Walker, Inc., the New York-based agency that won the bidding war and now represents Kirkpatrick, says he books 3,000 speakers a year for a ten-million-dollar market.

Until the early 1970s, college audiences dominated the circuit; now almost 85 percent of all speaking engagements are business-oriented. Walker says that a speaker who wants to make the time commitment can lecture every few days. This is not quite as rigorous a schedule as it sounds. Audiences don't overlap enough to require more than one speech, and they don't expect much in the way of substantive information.

Still, there is a danger of overexposure. "People who come out of government have a half-life of maybe six months," says William Lee of Coulton and Lee, a New Jersey-based agency. Kirkpatrick "can go and build a public career for herself independently of government, or she can cash in and be of no interest in a year or so," he adds. "When you read in the press that someone's out to make all the money he or she can in the next few years—say Geraldine Ferraro, for instance—it's a sign that that person's in serious trouble." The best way around this danger is to lecture on the side and spend the bulk of one's time on something else. Among the alternatives that have infused life-giving newspaper ink into ex-government lecturers are Kissinger's chairing of a 1982 blue-ribbon commission on Central America and Alexander Haig's year-long stint, soon after leaving office, as the chief of United Technologies.

Tenure. (Estimated take: $50,000-$60,000.) A college classroom doesn't compare to the lecture circuit for income, but it adds just the right touch to the identifying line below an Op-Ed piece in *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*. It sounds better to say you're a professor at Georgetown than it does to say you're on the lecture circuit, even if the latter takes up most of your time and brings in most of your money. Kirkpatrick, like many government intellectuals, was plucked from a tenured chair at Georgetown for her job in the U.N. She will return to that seat at a salary that is classified information, but is almost certainly more than $50,000 a year (Georgetown's average tenured faculty member makes $53,000).

Shadow tenure. (Estimated take: $30,000-$50,000.) The major think tanks offer a tenure-like arrangement that is also described as full-time but does not preclude full-time employment elsewhere. Kirkpatrick, when last at Georgetown, was also a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. Now, with only one teaching course commitment at Georgetown, she will resume that status. AEI will provide her with an assistant and an office; in return, it can tell people that her office there will be her daily base.

Heather David, a publicist at AEI, will say only that the salary for such arrangements is "tailored to the scholar" and "definitely enough to live on." Gerald Ford, as a "distinguished fellow" at AEI, reportedly makes $50,000 a year, but AEI spokesmen are vague about what he does for them in return. In addition to paying Ford, AEI acts as a mini-booking bureau, sending him on specially tailored "campus visits" of three or four days, during which he drops in on classes, takes a few meals with students, and addresses a large group.

BUT THINK TANKS are valuable for far more than the money they dole out. With their lists of "adjunct scholars," they form part of a vast network of visibility peddling—at least 400 academic centers, institutes, foundations, and councils cluttering up the interstices between government and academia. The total number of public policy scholars involved is only about 1,000. Robert Huberty, director of the Heritage Foundation's "resource bank" (a sort of clearinghouse for these structures), calls the phenomenon "the mutual advantage of formal acknowledgment." He says: "On the part of the institution it's an acknowledgment to the general public that a person of note is willing to be formally associated with the institution. On the part of the scholar, it's evidence that he's known to be associated with a scholarly institute in Washington, D.C." Participants get further visibility (and ever

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better lecture offers) through congressional testimony, appearances as "experts" on shows such as "Nightline" (no fee), or on commercial TV or radio commentary shows. These TV appearances can bring in an additional few hundred dollars apiece.

Books. Eminence doesn't write books (though it may ghostwrite them), but it makes obtaining contracts and agents considerably less problematic. The scramble for Kirkpatrick among agents at ICM, a leading New York literary agency, matched the battle of the booking bureaus. Contracts built on eminence vary widely. Celebrities are usually guaranteed an advance of $100,000 to $500,000, with the occasional million-dollar memoir such as Geraldine Ferraro's making the news, according to a Random House editor. The best and most colorful writers still get the biggest contracts, but eminence pays off more indirectly by pushing up the bidding for a given contract. Smaller houses will often bid a higher amount on a celebrity book than they think they can make back, hoping that the prestige of getting such an author on their list will offset the money loss.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Syndication. (Estimated take: $60,000 for a year of successful weekly columns.) For the ex-government official with emphatic policy views, a syndicated column can force visibility upward. Syndicates, even more than their clients, need to catch an editor's eye: "A newspaper has space for five or six columnists at the most, and there must be 300 of them out there," says Sidney Goldberg of United Feature Syndicate, which distributes weekly columns by Julian Bond, the black civil rights activist and Georgia state legislator, and will soon begin a column by George McGovern. A UFS columnist who sells to a hundred papers makes $1,200 a week, of which half goes to the syndicate; Goldberg thinks he could sell a Kirkpatrick column to "a couple of hundred papers here and abroad." He says UFS started angling for a contract with Kirkpatrick last November.

Big business. (Maximum documented take: $400,000 in a year, by Gerald Ford in 1981.) Once an executive realizes that a hired eminence is not going to tell state secrets in front of an audience of 400 tradesmen, the only logical solution is to start inviting her to board meetings. The practice of putting ex-government officials on corporate boards of directors has been gaining popularity for a decade.

About a third of corporate boards have a former government official as an outside director, according to Korn/Ferry International's annual survey of the Fortune 1000. Ex-government officials "have been exposed to power, and power play, and a lot of people find that very fascinating," says one executive. They also find it reassuring. Executives choosing outside directors "tend to be fearful of people they don't know," says the chairman of an American Stock Exchange company, "and the only way to pierce that is to get people who are so famous that their names are known to everyone." And the demand for these few is urgent: "Once word gets out that someone's leaving the government, it's just a free-for-all," says Jack Albertine of the American Business Conference.

As a board member of a typical corporation worth five billion dollars or more, the Korn/Ferry survey notes, an ex-government official can put in 148 hours' work for an average salary of nearly $35,000. That sounds like a substantial time commitment, but many of those hours are counted in travel time, telephone conversations, or the "working atmosphere" of a weekend conference. Moreover, they are only averages. The actual fees "tend to function as an index of the person's visibility," says one chairman. Ford, Kissinger, and Vernon Jordan all get more than $100,000 a year for sitting on the board of directors for Shearson/American Express. Limits on the number of boardships are what people in the profession call "self-imposed."

The really staggering amounts don't show up on the Korn/Ferry averages. These are the fees for "consulting," over and above the base fee for serving as a board member. Some companies pay a busy eminence for each meeting

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she attends; others pay a bonus for each phone call a board member makes in the line of duty, sometimes classifying this phone call as attendance at a board meeting. Kirkpatrick should be an especially sought-after corporate board-sitter because she is a woman and an academic, both categories that have become more desirable in recent years.

Even bigger business. The most daring known use of eminence to date is Henry Kissinger's consulting company, Kissinger Associates, which since 1982 has brought in an estimated $4.5 million a year by advising about 25 unidentified clients on investment and development trends on a worldwide basis. L. J. Davis pointed out in *Manhattan Inc.* magazine last September that Kissinger Associates puts Kissinger in the position of advising clients on world trends and problems that "some say he caused, contributed to or failed to prevent while in office, a situation that . . . resembles an optical illusion of stunning complexity." If after a month or two Kirkpatrick feels that her eminence isn't bringing in enough money through tested channels, she could follow Kissinger's lead and open a firm with which to advise clients about investment possibilities in Central America.

AMY E. SCHWARTZ

A bestiary of Democratic money men.

ASS BACKWARD

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S poignant quest for philosophical moorings is complicated and compromised by its search for political money. It is one thing for the Democrats to abandon old themes because the majority of voters seem weary of government programs, labor unions, and needy people. It is another thing altogether to move right because that is where the money is. The party's identity crisis and its cash crisis are happening simultaneously, and are hard to disentangle. But the danger is that the Democrats' natural identity as the party of the non-rich will be fatally undermined by the logic of campaign finance.

In late August 1984, about 70 of Walter Mondale's big financial backers got him to sit still for a meeting in St. Paul. There was widespread annoyance that phone calls had not been returned, and that Mondale's rhetoric, if not his program, had taken on a disturbingly populist tone. As Irv Kipnes, the California industrialist who was then head of the Democratic Party's "Business Council," recalls the session: "Several of us said, 'Fritz, quit knocking the rich; they're financing your campaign.' " Mondale replied, "Oh my goodness, I'm so sorry. There's nothing wrong with wanting to be rich. I want to be rich."

The Democratic Party's millionaires may not dictate the party's message, but they confuse it. The campaign finance reform movement of the early 1970s, which sharply limited the role of individual large donors, had a paradoxical effect on the two parties. On the Republican side, the new legal strictures on big donations and the unsavory memory of Maurice Stans bagging suitcases of cash pushed the party to develop a base of small donors. But the Democrats identified small donors with McGovern, new politics, and extremism. Robert Strauss, the party chairman from 1972 to 1976, made a public display of scrapping the 600,000-name McGovern donor list, and cultivated the PACs. "We had a list about three times the size of the Goldwater list that started the Republican direct mail," says a former DNC official, "but Bob Strauss threw the McGovern list out the window because he wanted to build a party dependent on his network of wealthy contributors, people who didn't really share the philosophy of the national party." By the 1984 election the Republicans had the best of both worlds—a business-oriented party with a mass base. The Democrats, on the other hand, had a party arguably dedicated to the common man, and deeply in hock to organized business.

The several loopholes in the campaign finance law conceived by party lawyers, interest groups, and Supreme Court justices have only pushed Democrats further into the arms of big money. The discovery of "soft money" (which is fat-cat money raised and laundered by the national parties and "conduited" to states with weak campaign finance laws) has allowed the return of the $100,000 contributor. In 1984 Democrats raised more soft money than Republicans. The Republicans, meanwhile, raised about six times as much small-donor money.

Even the recent, fairly successful effort under the regime of DNC chairman Chuck Manatt to develop direct mail fund-raising creates new contradictions. Direct mail uses ideological appeals to the party's most militant core, while fat-cat finance emphasizes mushy ambiguity. The problem is that the Democratic Party's financial strategy,

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taken as a whole, is hurtling down opposite paths at once. The pursuit of business money pushes the party right, while the pursuit of direct mail pushes it left. The pursuit of both simultaneously only reinforces the party's schizophrenia, which so plagued the Mondale campaign. The Republican Party has no such problem. Although there are differences between Jack Kemp's version of an opportunity society and tax lobbyist Charls Walker's, the party's direct mail appeals and its PAC appeals add up to a coherent ideological theme.

This conflict operates in all of the main political arenas where Democrats battle Republicans—in Congress, in presidential campaigns, and in the several realms of political fund-raising. The modern Democratic Party has always had something of a latent contradiction between its populist base and its plutocratic backers. In 1932, of all years, the Democrats' national chairman was John J. Raskob, former chairman of General Motors's finance committee; Raskob was donating something like half a million dollars a year out of his own pocket to keep the DNC solvent, and he gave $148,000 to the 1932 campaign. Roosevelt, despite his populism, had legions of Wall Street financiers, as Lyndon Johnson had oilmen.

Traditionally, Democratic fat cats tended to be slightly outside the mainstream corporate establishment. They were often Jewish or Catholic rather than Protestant, new entrepreneurial money rather than inherited money, investment bankers rather than commercial bankers, oil wildcatters rather than oil majors, retailers and real estate developers rather than industrialists. And there was a good sampling of people who were simply class traitors, millionaires with either left-wing convictions or a sense of noblesse oblige. The fat-cat side of Democratic Party finance was also substantially offset by labor money, at a time when the labor movement was more influential and perceived more as a force for general liberal principles than as just another interest group.

As the system of campaign finance has changed, so has the bestiary of Democratic money men. The limitations on individual giving have placed a premium on collective money-raising, which means special interest PACs and individuals who are adept at shaking down money from their friends and colleagues. As Herbert E. Alexander, the author of several books on campaign finance, observes, "Parties can no longer depend on a Clement Stone or a Stewart Mott. We've exchanged the big giver for the big solicitor."

THE DEMOCRATS' new money mechanics come in essentially three varieties: wealthy idealists or ethnic loyalists to the party, who give money out of habit, civic obligation, or ideological conviction; newly rich entrepreneurs seeking political influence or social cachet; and rising Washington-based lawyers who can invest a few years laboring for the party, making contacts, and distributing funds—and then cash in handsomely in an enlarged law/lobby practice that serves mostly Republican-oriented business interests.

Of the three, the last category is the most corrosive of the party's identity. Robert Strauss is the grand champion of this brand of political entrepreneurship. After serving the party as treasurer and then as DNC chairman, he became one of the capital's premier power brokers. The Washington office of his law firm, Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, has grown from two lawyers in 1971 to 90 lawyers in 1982. Strauss serves as a powerful if unfortunate role model. At the moment several key veterans of the Mondale campaign are striving to emulate him. Mondale lieutenants Tim Finchem, the campaign's chief fundraiser, and Bob Beckel, the deputy campaign chair, recently formed a new Washington lobbying firm called National Strategies, whose clientele will be business interests with regulatory problems. The first person they hired was David K. Aylward, staff director of Representative Tim Wirth's Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Consumer Protection and Finance, which has jurisdiction over such lucrative issues as telephone deregulation and tender-offer ground rules. Finchem says he sees Aylward as a splendid drawing card.

The Democratic Party's 1981-85 finance chairman, Peter Kelly, a Connecticut-based lawyer, has just joined forces with one of Washington's most visible Republican lobbying firms, Black, Manafort and Stone. The corpse of the Mondale campaign was still warm when Kelly began negotiating with Paul Manafort about a bipartisan partnership. As part of the firm's new look, it has also taken on former Russell Long aide Van Boyette and Dan Rostenkowski's longtime assistant Jim Healey, which gives the firm a specialty in tax lobbying. Its clientele, not surprisingly, doesn't include Citizens for Tax Justice, but does include several Fortune 500 firms, including Bethlehem Steel, as well as the investment banking house Salomon Brothers.

IF KELLY were simply joining the Republican side, as it were, he would be following a well-beaten path of upward mobility and ideological compromise. But Kelly is keeping his Democratic Party credentials intact. He is continuing to fund-raise for House and Senate Democratic candidates, which keeps current the legislative contacts and IOUs that are so useful to the corporate clientele. With Manatt, Kelly has also created a new "National Democratic Institute for International Affairs," of which Kelly is treasurer. The institute will address trade and foreign policy issues, assist the Democrats in thinking through new ideas, and give Kelly's firm one more avenue of influence.

The stock-in-trade of money mechanics like Kelly is the contemporary equivalent of what Plunkitt of Tammany Hall called "honest graft." Let us be clear about our qualms. Honest graft of this sort is troubling, not on grounds of morality or civics-book virtue, but on partisan grounds: for Democrats, the political problem with the new money brokers is not that they are personally corrupt, but that they are politically androgynous. They are unreliable allies. Their loyalties are usually more careerist than ideological or partisan. The self-interest of these people

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rarely suggests a bold, straightforward liberalism. It suggests ambiguity and accommodation. It suggests the 1981 tax act, in which Democrats outbid Republicans with special corporate favors. And as these people's capacity to define the Democratic Party grows, the party's message loses its clarity. Their influence tends to make it less the party of egalitarianism, and more a second, fuzzy-headed business party. The vague stench of decay that emanated from the Mondale campaign had far more to do with the role of the professional money mechanics than with the supposed senescence of the idea that Democrats should continue serving America's dispossessed.

The Democrats' uneasy financial relationship with organized business, of course, has been an incipient problem ever since ex-New Dealers of the Paul Porter/Tommy "The Cork" Corcoran generation set up law offices and switched sides, but neglected to switch parties. The slippery career slope from the FTC and the antitrust division of the Justice Department to the pro-trust divisions of K Street is well worn. But there are new elements.

Although business-oriented Washington lawyers like Porter, Clark Clifford, and Lloyd Cutler have long played a party insider role, shunting money to Democratic Party candidates was only a minor part of their repertoire. As recently as 20 years ago, lawyer/lobbyists hadn't quite taken over the party. And their influence was offset by the balancing influence of labor, civil rights groups, and the rest of the coalition. Unlike a Clifford or a Cutler, people like Kelly perform their legislative brokering primarily in the coin of campaign finance.

IN 1980, when Chuck Manatt became chairman of the Democratic National Committee, the Democratic Party had been chronically broke since the divisive 1968 campaign. In rebuilding the national party, Manatt pushed hard both to develop direct mail and to reach out to organized business. He encouraged young entrepreneurs to run for Congress, and created a Democratic Business Council, 350 members strong, headed by his friend and fellow Californian Irv Kipnes. For a contribution of $10,000, a businessman could join the council, and presumably influence party affairs. Manatt was pursuing the old game of separating fat cats from their money, but with one new wrinkle. Rich people were being asked to get involved, not just as well-to-do individuals who happened to be Democrats, but as business leaders articulating a business viewpoint.

Although these people still cover a wide swath of the ideological spectrum, their cumulative message is that the party, to recover, must have friendlier relations with the business community and move to the right generally, especially on economics. The Democrats seem to have fewer money men motivated by noblesse oblige, and more motivated by the self-interest of business as a class. In the jousting over the 1982 tax bill, Manatt himself used his party position to lobby Democratic members of Congress to retain "safe harbor leasing," one of the most egregious and economically inefficient gimmicks of the 1981 tax act.

Washington real estate developer Nathan Landow is emblematic of the new money men who backed Mondale. A few days after Jimmy Carter's 1980 defeat, Landow paid a call on Walter Mondale, uninvited, to offer him his full support for 1984. Landow placed his private jet at Mondale's disposal and he personally raised over two million dollars. Unlike more passive money raisers, Landow fancies himself something of a kingmaker. During the campaign, he took to calling the party's 37-member national finance board "The Board of Directors," almost as if it were the campaign's final authority. Landow says that money people are a bit tired of being asked for support and then having their advice ignored. After Mondale's campaign, he organized several of the big donors and fund-raisers into his own PAC, called IMPAC-88, which will "interview candidates and hopefully have an impact on the nominee." The Democratic Party, Landow adds, "needs to move in a more moderate, centrist direction."

THAT VIEW is hardly a surprise coming from the party's business backers, but as their role increases, so does their influence. According to Irv Kipnes, the Democratic Business Council was instrumental in pushing the party platform to adopt a more hawkish position on defense spending. "For the first time in 20 years," Kipnes says, "the Democrats were not beaten over the head on the defense issue. I take some pride in that. The defense contractor members of our Business Council worked very hard on that. So we had some real insider knowledge and input on the defense issue."

Maybe the Mondale campaign was right to take a fairly hard line on defense and maybe it wasn't, but surely the issue should not be decided on the basis of the influence of defense contractor money. The party, of course, still has its cadres of ideologically motivated millionaires, concentrated in places like Beverly Hills and metropolitan New York. But these are less reliably liberal than they used to be, and relatively less influential in party finance compared to the money men who want something. Moreover, most of the ideologically motivated big givers tend to be more liberal on such "social" issues as the nuclear freeze, environmentalism, gay rights, and so forth, but they reflect their own class interest on economic issues. As Stanley Sheinbaum, one of the mainstays of West Los Angeles left-liberal philanthropy, observes, "My Beverly Hills liberal friends think the Republican tax reform plan is too left-wing."

Moreover, among the party's Jewish donors, the Jewish community's growing concern for the plight of Israel has partly displaced its traditional liberal socioeconomic influence. Max Palevsky, the Los Angeles financier who was George McGovern's early backer, says, "That intense instinct that Jews have about what is good for them used to mean that Jews backed liberal candidates intuitively; what was good for the Jews meant civil rights and a society without intense social warfare. In Southern California today, a lot of the money that used to be normal Jewish do-gooder money has a string."

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A great many of the Democrats' newly rich backers are looking for nothing more than a new stage to play on. When a list of the Democrats' hundred-thousand-dollar "soft money" donors was discovered by a reporter, it included a man named Stuart Moldaw, who was hardly known outside San Francisco. Moldaw turns out to be a venture capitalist, whose worst self-seeking motive, according to an associate, is "the desire to sit at the elbow of the most important person in the room." Likewise, Nathan Landow may generally want a more centrist Democratic Party, but he is not primarily a lobbyist. Why does Landow get involved in party affairs? "Nate already has his $60 million and his Learjet," says one who has done business with him. "He's looking for respect." Landow himself says, "I just enjoy politics. It's a great experience for me, having friends all over the country, meeting new people. It's a hobby."

In short, the role of individual millionaires like Landow, though far from ideal, is less insidious to the party than the role played by brokers like a Strauss or a Kelly, for the party's individual high rollers are playing mainly for the personal satisfactions, while people like Kelly are in the direct business of systematically brokering votes to organized interests.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

For campaign finance to play a brokering role, there must be two parties to the bargain, a donor and a recipient. The Democratic Party's new money mechanics have found their ideal counterpart in Representative Tony Coelho, the chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Coelho is the Democrats' Dr. Faustus. When Coelho took over the post in 1981, the disparity between the two parties' Capitol Hill fund-raising operations was appalling. In the 1979-80 campaign cycle, the three official Republican campaign committees outspent their Democratic counterparts by the staggering margin of six to one. Republicans spent about $190 million, Democrats $28 million.

Coelho mounted a systematic effort to shake down business PACs. He managed to increase the Congressional Campaign Committee's resources from $1.8 million in 1979-80, to $6.5 million in 1981-82, to $11 million in 1983-84. At the same time, he invested much of the proceeds in small direct mail. By 1984 his committee was getting nearly half its money in mail donations, compared to over 90 percent for the Republican Congressional Committee. "We have cut the overall gap from about eight to one to three or four to one," Coelho says.

Thomas Edsall observed in *The New Politics of Inequality* that the main product Democrats had to sell business PACs was incumbency. Business PACS, he noted, give a lot of money to Democrats, but almost all of it to Democratic incumbents, while in open races they overwhelmingly back Republicans. This trend only intensified in the 1983-84 election cycle, when PACs actually gave Democrats slightly more money than Republicans.

Coelho has exploited this asset deftly. "Business has to deal with us whether they want to or not," he says bluntly. "I tell them, 'You're going to need to work with us. Do you want to be able to talk to all the parties that make the decisions, or only some of them?' " The not so subtle implication, of course, is that access costs, and those who can't or won't pay get less access. Coelho now has one staff person detailed to helping business PACs identify Democratic candidates and incumbents with whom they're ideologically compatible. If a Democrat is hostile to one special interest, somewhere there's another special interest he can come to terms with.

The trouble, of course, is that the most consistently liberal Democrats are the most likely ones to be dealt out of this game. As Coelho-watcher Ed Zuckerman, editor of the authoritative newsletter *PACs and Lobbies*, observes, "Coelho in effect is saying that he'll help the pro-business PACs identify which Democrats they can support, but sorry, fella, we can't raise money for you because you're Darth Vader." In several cases, House members say, votes were actually put off in the House because they awkwardly coincided with Coelho fund-raising events.

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To switch literary allusions, Coelho has emerged as the Milo Minderbinder of campaign finance, with something to sell just about everybody. Brooks Jackson of *The Wall Street Journal* recently wrote a hilarious story fingering Coelho as the marriage broker behind a new PAC called the Council for a Secure America, which turns out to be a grotesque alliance between Jewish supporters of Israel and Texas oil wildcatters, based on the dubious premise that more tax breaks for domestic oil drillers will punish the Arabs.

There are many congressional Democrats, including some reliably liberal ones, who say privately that Coelho's approach may be repugnant, but that the most important thing for the party is to get back in the game, whatever it takes. The Democrats, after all, picked up 26 House seats in 1982, and did surprisingly well in 1984, when they held the Republican gains to 14, far less than Republican leaders had predicted. Coelho's campaign chest can take some credit for that.

At the same time, Coelho's role as in-house dispenser of largess has given him influence that makes many members uneasy. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee reports to an executive committee so large that it is impotent, and Coelho is the main influence in determining which member gets how much campaign money. He is now considered a front-runner to become the next House Democratic whip. But, adds one member who is no fan of Coelho, "The problem isn't Tony. The problem is what the system forces people to do."

Many congressional Democrats, on the other hand, affect a kind of "tut-tut-tut, we're all grown-ups around here" position on fat-cat finance, and brand the concerns about ideological corruption as naive. They take it as a personal attack on their integrity. It may corrupt the system, they argue, but it doesn't corrupt me. Hale Boggs, the late Democratic majority leader, once said, "If you can't eat their food and drink their liquor and take their money and screw their women and still look them in the eye and vote against them, then you don't belong in Congress."

Even so good a reformer as Representative Barney Frank says, "I don't think that votes follow money. I think that money follows votes. Business PACs invest in incumbents. It's the banks against the thrifts, the insurance companies against the banks, the Wall Street investment banks against the money center commercial banks. There's money any way you vote."

The Democratic Party's self-styled realists are confusing two critiques: a civic concern articulated most forcefully by Common Cause and Elizabeth Drew that political money is corrupting the democratic process—and a more frankly political critique, best made by Thomas Edsall, that fat-cat money is neutering the Democratic Party.

NOTHING illustrates the financial cross-pressures on the hapless party better than the spectacle of 135 Democratic congressmen, adrift at the upper-crust Greenbrier resort early in March, being preached to by motivational experts, marketing gurus, and even the Reagan administration's former director of communications, David Gergen, all under the sponsorship of corporate lobbyists.

Critics of PAC campaign financing often say that PACs use campaign contributions, figuratively, to buy access and set agendas. At the Greenbrier weekend the corporate lobbyists, for $5,000, literally bought access, and literally helped set the agenda. These included such improbable Democratic Party recruits as super-lobbyist Charls Walker, formerly Republican treasury under secretary; Bill Timmons, formerly Richard Nixon's chief congressional lobbyist; as well as corporate representatives from G.E., Chevron, Morgan Stanley, among others. To put this in perspective, imagine Lane Kirkland buying his way into a Republican Party strategy session. The only labor donor to Greenbrier, the United Auto Workers, which was dunned for $5,000, declined to send a representative. "We didn't like the smell of the thing," says UAW's Washington chief, Don Stillman.

Representative Richard Gephardt, a prime mover behind Greenbrier and a dark-horse candidate for the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination, is one of those moderates who preaches that the party should rise above the old-fashioned "special interest" politics of the New Deal coalition. But the Greenbrier meeting suggests that the party isn't really abandoning special interests so much as trading in one set for another. Neoliberalism, as a philosophy, sensibly calls upon Democrats to transcend the politics of "interest group liberalism" to identify the party with a broader general interest. But Greenbrier symbolizes a new, bastardized mixture that combines the worst features of both styles of politics. Call it (you heard it here) interest group neoliberalism, which might be defined as the movement away from traditional liberal values and constituencies not in an effort to find a better version of the general interest, but in order to tap upscale special interests with more money.

To be sure, there are good reasons unrelated to campaign finance for the Democrats to grapple with such difficult issues as how to define compassion and opportunity non-bureaucratically, and how to put an egalitarian twist on entrepreneurship. But Greenbrier symbolizes the unfortunate convergence of the neoliberal agenda with the fat-cat agenda, and this will remain a fatal temptation.

WHAT, THEN, is to be done? There are three schools of thought. The Manatt-Coelho school says simply that the Democratic Party, to be heard, needs to raise more money, from whatever source; that the party cannot be bought; and that it needs to move to the center anyway. A second solution is to downplay big donors in favor of direct mail. A third calls for an all-out Democratic Party drive for public financing.

The perils of the fund-raise-at-any-cost strategy should be clear. Of the reformist routes, the direct mail approach is seemingly very attractive. In four years Democratic Party direct mail gross income has grown from $1.5 million to about $12 million a year, and the number of donors has

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grown from about 50,000 to over half a million. (Republicans boast 1.8 million contributors; they passed the half-million mark ten years ago.) In 1980 about four-fifths of the Democratic National Committee's gross income money was fat-cat and PAC money. Today more than half is small money.

ACCORDING TO Frank O'Brien, the 33-year-old former Nader fund-raiser who heads direct mail operations for the DNC, the big breakthrough was Manatt's willingness to plow direct mail proceeds back into further direct mail "prospecting," rather than siphoning it off for party operations. The Democrats have become ingenious at developing new techniques such as using free voter lists, which are then targeted through census tract data. The idea is to pick a concentration of Democratic voters who are, say, home owners approaching retirement age and hit them with a logical "Democratic" theme, such as defense of Social Security or Medicare.

The DNC's current hot mailing piece is a letter from Representative Claude Pepper, who explains that Reagan's budget cutters are mounting an assault on Medicare, and concludes, "Right now, millions of older Americans are counting on you and the Democratic Party as their Defenders against Medicare cuts." The mailer includes a copy of an authentic tearjerker letter that Pepper received from one Arthur M. Nottingham of Mt. Meigs, Alabama, complete with spindly handwriting, recounting, "Recently, I had surgery to replace clogged arteries," and warning that "too many elderly people like me (70) without adequate insurance may die if Medicare benefits are cut any more."

The Pepper mailing piece is ideological, issue-oriented, constituency-rousing, slightly demagogic, and highly effective. Unlike much that the Democratic Party does, it has the virtue of taking a clear position. Ralph Whitehead of the University of Massachusetts, a student and advocate of direct mail, contends: "Direct mail is the grass roots organizing tool of the information society. Whether you sit at someone's kitchen table talking politics or reach them through the mail, both are forms of political participation."

"Short of an election," says Frank O'Brien, "there is no better way to market-test political ideas." O'Brien has lots more such themes he wants to try. "We could raise a small fortune around tax simplification," he says. "Direct mail can rebuild the party around populist themes, and neutralize the influence of the money people."

The only trouble with direct mail as a panacea is that the mail is a relatively inefficient way to raise money, compared to spending ten dollars for a chicken dinner to raise a $1,000 fat-cat donation. Something like 30 percent of direct mail income goes to pay direct mailing and printing costs. Another 10 percent to 20 percent goes to rebuild mailing lists. The Democratic National Committee, according to O'Brien, grossed about $20 million from direct mail in the 1983-84 cycle, but about six million dollars of that went for costs, and another four million dollars for donor prospecting. Even the Republicans, according to their direct mail director, Phil Smith, spend a small fortune to get their direct mail income. Smith says that after two years only 40 percent of direct mail givers continue to respond to pitches, so lists must constantly be renewed, at great cost.

Even more disconcertingly, despite the greater direct mail effort mounted by both parties, the statistics show that campaign finance is tilting ever more sharply in the direction of the big, conservative special interest donor. According to research by Richard Conlon, staff director of the Democratic Study Group, small giving (under $100) as a fraction of total House and Senate campaign finance has dropped steadily from 68 percent of total funds raised in 1978, to 56 percent in 1982, to less than 50 percent in 1984. The dollar amount actually dropped, while PAC receipts soared, from $58 million to $74 million. And Democrats actually raised more PAC money than Republicans. So if the small direct mail donor is to be the salvation of the Democratic Party, the salvation will be a long time coming.

Conlon did the staff research on a reform bill sponsored last session by Representatives Matt McHugh and Barber Conable of New York. The bill would provide a 100 percent tax credit for small donors, provided that they lived in the district of the candidate who received the donation. Common Cause recently dropped its long-standing effort to enact direct public financing via matching funds, and proposed its own version of a tax credit.

The value of the McHugh-Conable approach is that it would not prohibit PACs, but it would give congressional candidates an alternative means of fund-raising that would allow them to forgo special interest contributions if they chose to. This solves the constitutional problems inherent in any contribution limit.

THE McHugh-Conable approach is probably the most sensible, but the trouble with even the most technically ingenious reforms is that the Republican Party and the worst of the Democratic incumbents like the present system just fine. About all the Democrats can do pending the next major scandals and the next wave of reform is to emphasize small direct mail as much as possible, and avoid turning the party machinery entirely over to the money people. It would also be useful for the party to make a reform like McHugh-Conable a major campaign plank, and really mean it.

In 1932, when the Hoover administration was staggering to an end, the late Senator Huey Long remarked, "The great trouble with the Democrats is that we have all the votes and no money. In the present situation I believe the best thing we could do is sell President Hoover a million votes for half of what he is going to pay to try to get them. We can spare the votes and we could use the money."

Today the Republicans have the votes, and both parties are awash in special interest money. Before the Democrats can revive as an opposition party, they will have to remember that votes are ultimately more important than money. Odd as it sounds, to regain some votes they will have to forgo some money. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Familiar Stories

In 1982 Susan Seidelman, a young American director, made *Smithereens* on a budget of $80,000. It was a small, radically true piece of work. In 1985 Seidelman makes *Desperately Seeking Susan* on a budget of five million dollars. It's bloated, silly rubbish.

Smithereens (TNR, December 6, 1982) dealt unsparingly with an empty young woman trying frantically to become a subject of hype instead of its victim. En route, the film pilloried unearned despair—despair as SoHo chic—with a naturalism so intense that it became a species of abstraction. The story, in which Seidelman had a hand, concerned a 20-year-old who came from New Jersey to the pads and discos of the Village and thereby felt superior to her sister who stayed in the suburbs with a husband and babies. *Desperately Seeking Susan* was written by Leora Barish and presumably was offered to Seidelman because it, too, deals with a young woman from New Jersey who gets hooked on Village style. The script has a basic premise: people who live in Village lofts and who wear Eighth Street clothes are ipso facto closer to the secrets of the universe than people who live in suburban homes and eat canapés. The plot reflects an equal verity: a bored New Jersey housewife reads newspaper personal ads that are headlined "Desperately Seeking Susan" and are signed Jim; she becomes dreamily fascinated by this romance, turns up at a rendezvous, has an accident, suffers amnesia—amnesia as plot crux in 1985!—is mistaken for the real Susan, and gets involved in another person's life.

Desperately Seeking Susan
Orion

King David
Paramount

Genuinely clever plots have their own aesthetic rewards; unclever clever plots are a heavier burden than failed seriousness. Matters are even worse in *Susan* because it's a distorting mirror image of *Smithereens*: all that was rigorous and right in the earlier picture has been betrayed here in a lunge for the brass ring.

A few glimpses of talent are discernible in the second film. Seidelman has some sense of appropriate visual texture. With her cinematographer, Edward Lachman, and her production designer, Santo Loquasto, she has tried for a lushness to suggest facile gratification. Aidan Quinn, as Mr. Right in the Village, has simple appeal; Mark Blum, as Mr. Stuffy in the suburbs, deals deftly with a trite role. But Rosanna Arquette, as the housewife, is an embarrassing amateur whom Seidelman hasn't been able to help; and a pop singer called Madonna, as the real Susan, is a younger Cher with promise of equal street-smart offensiveness.

In interviews, Seidelman has made statements, possibly anticipating adverse reaction, to the effect that if a woman director flops with her first Hollywood movie, she never gets another chance. Presumably she is thinking of Claudia Weill, who made the memorable small-scale *Girlfriends* (1978), which brought her the Hollywood film *It's My Turn* (1980), a dud. Weill hasn't been visible on screen since then. Does Weill's history prove a conspiracy against women? If Seidelman has trouble now, will the conspiracy be further proved? Or will it prove, yet again, that money men watch for talent, male or female, in low-budget work; grab it; then throw it away when it's not as good in their grip as it was when independent?

Making a serious film career has never been harder in this country than it is now. I've always believed that any good film made anywhere is to some degree a triumph over the conditions of filmmaking; this has never been more true than it is here and now. But, obviously, it doesn't follow that judgment ought to be lightened. *Desperately Seeking Susan* is a *fait accompli*, for which Seidelman is responsible. If it succeeds and leads to more such work, then Seidelman's future is a fate *accompli*. If it doesn't succeed and she gets no more big offers, the question is still open. For this talented director, I have to hope that she has a tough independent road ahead.

Only a fool, you may say, would expect a zillion-dollar biblical epic to have any merit. Well, I'm one such fool, because *King David* was directed by Bruce Beresford, the Australian who made the crisp *Breaker Morant* and the superb *Tender Mercies*. Besides, Beresford had two former colleagues with him, both excellent, the cinematographer, Don McAlpine, and the editor, William Anderson. The production designer was Ken Adam, who did *Dr. Strangelove* and *Barry Lyndon*; the costume designer was John Mollo, who did *Barry Lyndon* and *Gandhi* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. Possibly I may be forgiven for hoping that *King David* would at least be a treat for the eye. But all these talents are hobbled and unfulfilled. The picture isn't even worth *looking* at. (For pete's sake,

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Camila. Argentina, 1847. The passions of a highborn maiden and a young priest, based on fact. Old-style steaminess, made appealing by the actors. (Reviewed 4/15/85)

1984. Richard Burton (O'Brien) and John Hurt (Winston Smith) are first-class in the narrative core of Orwell's novel. Design and direction are chillingly good. (2/4/85)

The Purple Rose of Cairo. Another splendid Woody Allen idea shortchanged by Woody Allen. The plot—a woman and a film actor she fantasizes down off the screen—leads us on, then just quits. (4/1/85)

The Sure Thing. Two college freshmen (freshpersons?) squabble across the U.S. until they get together. Froth, but it really bubbles. (4/8/85)

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Goliath isn't even much of a giant.)

Most of the film is written and acted as if under the guidance of S. J. Perelman. David's story, as complex and gripping as any in the Old Testament, is chopped into a series of episodes, with voice-over connectives, that are ungainly, unfocused, like scenes for a Sunday school pageant. The dialogue, by Andrew Birkin and James Costigan, does what it can to test our sobriety. At one point a prophet reproves David: "When will you learn to obey the Lord your God instead of your emotions?" The stabbings and spearings and decapitations are emphasized to make us comprehend the harshness of life Back Then, but they merely make us wriggle and giggle. (And I'm talking only about the "civilian" killings, not the many battles.) The acting is just a mass of shaggy heads and beards, with one actor after another using his moments on screen to summon up inner majesty before he goes home to London.

The one exception is the performance of Saul by Edward Woodward, who does a creditable job with the growing madness in the aging king. But then Woodward has the second-best part. In the title role, Richard Gere has one excellent scene, David dancing before the Lord (2 Sam. 6). Beresford carries the scene from the gates of the city along a road on the side of a hill, and Gere, clad only in breechclout, dances the whole way, sustaining the long passage with strength and abandon. Nothing else in his performance comes close to this celebration, especially because he is surrounded by British actors who make his speech sound mushy.

Primitive chic in Australia.

ABORIGINES

BY SHIVA NAIPAUL

WHEN Anthony Trollope visited Australia in 1872, the Aboriginal presence had shrunk to the margins of consciousness. For triumphant settlerdom, the derelict remnants of the dispossessed race no longer constituted a "question" or a "problem." They did not even arouse curiosity or wonder. At best, they were the objects of morbid anthropological scrutiny. The Great Australian Silence had closed in about them. What the gun had started, indifference was bringing to completion. In scattered reserves out in the sticks, a handful of missionaries was doing what little could be done for the blackfellows, performing, it could be said, the obsequies for a race assumed by most to be doomed to extinction.

In 1872 imperial confidence, vigor, and righteousness were in full flood. What would now be referred to as race relations seemed to have been arranged for all time. It was not a good time for those on the lower reaches of the evolutionary scale. Trollope wrote a big, tedious book about the Antipodean colonies. A modest chapter is devoted to the Aborigines. Their fate stirred in him neither compassion nor solicitude: "the Aboriginal . . . whom you are called on to kill,—lest he should kill you or your wife, or because he spears your cattle,—is to be to you the same as a tiger or a snake." He mocked at those who, surrendering to vague sentiment, praised the dignified bearing displayed by many of the blackfellows. That alleged dignity of deportment, he retorted, represented nothing more than the trickery of a "sapient monkey." He was not moved by stories of faithfulness and devotion to duty: exceptional cases of constancy only served to highlight the innate worthlessness and shiftlessness of the race. The Aboriginal, the lowest of the low, was good for nothing; he was not even fit to be a servant, being "infinitely lower" than the African Negro. The latter, in the cotton and sugarcane fields of the New World, had demonstrated—under the firm governance of firm masters—his capacity for sustained manual labor. He had shown that he could be civilized into usefulness.

Trollope concedes, without a tremor of discomfort, that the land now so ripe with abundance was, in effect, the booty of dispossession; that Australia was no Terra Nullius, no empty quarter devoid of titles to ownership prior to the appearance of the Europeans. But then, so what? Could—should—what passes for natural justice be allowed to stand in the way of the expansion of the civilizing instinct? Should Light, out of a nervous niceness about trespass, shrink before Darkness? The answer was obvious. The Aboriginal, condemned by his own degradation, impervious to improving influences, had sentenced himself. He had to go.

In Trollope's digressions on the Aborigines we see the civilizing mission, the dogma of progress, in its most naked aspect. Theirs was to be a defeat without honor or remembrance, with no hint of possible redemption. His bland, brandy-and-water bonhomie adds to our unease. This prolix herald of Anglo-Saxon destiny is the most genial of exterminators—and not without a touch of philanthropy: the blacks, perish though they must, should, he avers, be allowed to slide into extinction "without unnecessary suffering."

If Trollope, a century ago, threatened to make the blacks the victims of his imperialist presumption, there are those in our own time who, moved by principles apparently in direct contradiction to his, are in no less danger of doing something similar. The contemporary mania for preservation, for the restoration of the timeless verities of culture and identity, is as disconcerting as Trollope's genocidal urges. In our day the Aboriginal has been costumed in the haute couture of prevailing intellectual fashion. He has been hailed as an ecological saint, obdurate freedom fighter, mystical dandy. Clothed in the garments of modish fantasy, he has emerged from the mists of forgetfulness.

LAST YEAR, toward the end of October, the discovery of a "lost" Aboriginal clan was announced. Just how lost they actually were is debatable: one of the boys in the group was called Thomas. The excitement generated by this find would, one imagines, have appalled Trollope. The Central Land Council responded with militant rapture. It threatened to prosecute sight-

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seers; anxiety was voiced about the clan's exposure to strange germs; it was rumored that they were to be honored by a visit from no less a personage than the minister of Aboriginal affairs. The anthropologists responded with caution (that boy Thomas!), skeptical about the clan's scientific value. A reporter—the first on the scene—became almost lyrical in her attempt to describe these lost folk. They were, according to her, both statuesque and delicate of build, with skin of a translucent texture and eyes like deep pools. In a word, they were beautiful. Their nakedness contrasted favorably with the clothes worn by their domesticated brethren living in the outstation to which they had come. These newcomers of lustrous eye and skin had yet to be "taught shame by the white man."

Another writer, however, seemed a little piqued with the lost tribe. Their "coming in" defied the trend toward going out. Across Australia, the Aborigines were on the move, turning their backs on the missions and stations, heading away from contact with a civilization that had never done them any good. Only when he was allowed to do "a bit of hunting and food-gathering" did the black begin to recover his spiritual wholeness and reality. The black became himself, it would appear, only when he was restored to some semblance of his original condition and was again a primitive. I use this last term with caution—it has got me into a lot of trouble; though I am not sure why it should be objectionable to so describe those elemental activities associated with nomadism in the desert places.

The writer's ideal Aboriginal (very sad, very lost) talks in a dilapidated patois: ". . . Want to go back west, me been thinking. I been worry and worry for my country . . ." It is odd that the quest for authenticity—at any rate in this case—should be coupled to the threadbare rags of a Pidgin English that robs the individual of the power of self-expression; a self-expression no doubt available to him in his own language, whose locutions could be rendered (presumably) into grammatical English. But if this were done, I suppose, his gain in lucidity would be balanced by a diminution of effect. The quasi-romantic belief in an ahistorical Aboriginal essence, beyond the reach of time, beyond even the reach of language, is well displayed in the writer's testy sentimentality.

ABORIGINAL DANCERS.
COURTESY OF AUSTRALIAN INFORMATION SERVICE.

The Great Australian Silence has been replaced by the Great Australian Confusion.

In Darwin, when I was there last September, they were doing their best to celebrate National Aborigines Week. On a pearly morning of drizzle, I stirred myself and went to Raintree Square, in the malled heart of the town, to have a look at one of the advertised events marking the festivities. A modest crowd had gathered—mostly tourists, I guessed, in search of casual diversion: in the Northern Territory, as in Queensland, the Aboriginal cause seems to lack popular appeal. The bony, skin-blemished woman given to playing "Waltzing Matilda" on her violin had not strayed from her chair in the mall. Her scrapings threaded a thin vein of lackluster patriotism through the humid morning.

I myself, let it be admitted, was not in a suitably celebratory frame of mind. A day or two before, the Northern Land Council—acting on advice tendered them by a couple of anthropologists (at least so they called themselves) of expatriate extraction and a woman of mixed descent (who had taken exception to my remarking over dinner in a Chinese restaurant that the Aborigines could not be considered to have created a culture as sophisticated, say, as that of the Chinese or Greeks or Indians or Egyptians)—had banned me from the territories under its control. They had heard, one of their spokesmen later clarified, that I had said the Aborigines were a primitive race. "The people" had been much incensed to learn this—a process of consultation that could only have been telepathic—and had taken appropriate action against me. Under no circumstances, he added, would "the people" reverse their decision.

"So," I had said to the woman of mixed descent, "you run a police state."

"Yes," she replied. "And we're proud of it." Alas, my view of the Aboriginal cause had been sharpened.

After that episode the contest for restitution that had seemed, at first, so pleasantly quixotic a crusade assumed the depressingly familiar lineaments of so-called liberation struggle the world over; it had become, I began to understand, an excuse for excess and empty posturing. To pretend to believe that the Aboriginal (I employ the term in its

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loosest, everyday meaning) is, or can be, anything other than a petitioner at the impregnable gates of "White Australia," to endow with undue credibility such rhetorical manifestations of autonomy as a separate flag, colorful "tent embassies," calls for treaties and the like, is to encourage the drift to delusion and eventual political disaster. Insignificant though it might be in itself, my banishment by fiat in the name of the people was a symptom of decay. Still, the Northern Land Council deserved to be congratulated: I have traveled fairly extensively over the face of the planet, and theirs was the first such banning order that had ever been imposed on me.

STANDING in the drizzle, an uncharitable sourness of expression marring my usual affability, I watched the confused preparations for the morning's entertainment. Varied excitements would be enlivening the coming week. The first National Aboriginal Art Award ever was to be handed out; there were to be exhibitions of traditional dancing and singing and music. Less traditionally, there would be film and video shows, a street march, a football match. A baby show was planned, as was a family day replete with "bush foods." Elderly (and genuinely) Aboriginal men and women were sprawled under the trees, their dusty legs stretched out like blackened sticks before them. They contemplated the city scene with a bemused, abandoned gaiety. Among them, foreheads banded with the red, black, and yellow insignia of the cause, moved a number of energetic white females, ministering to the comforts of their clientele, exuding an air of ferocious amiability as they chatted and laughed with and caressed the tangled heads of their charges.

Television cameras swayed above the heads of the moistened crowd. At one end of the little square, a banner proclaimed that the Earth was the (Aboriginal) Mother. ("Our life-style," said a native member of the Territory's legislative assembly, "reflects the environment through our dreamings, and our emotional and physical well-being are determined by the need to be in harmony with our natural environment.") I spotted one of my adversaries, the white press officer of the Northern Land Council.

He was a strange young man. Simultaneously, he managed somehow to be

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When Saigon fell to the Communists ten years ago, Americans lost more than the war in Vietnam. They lost their critical objectivity.

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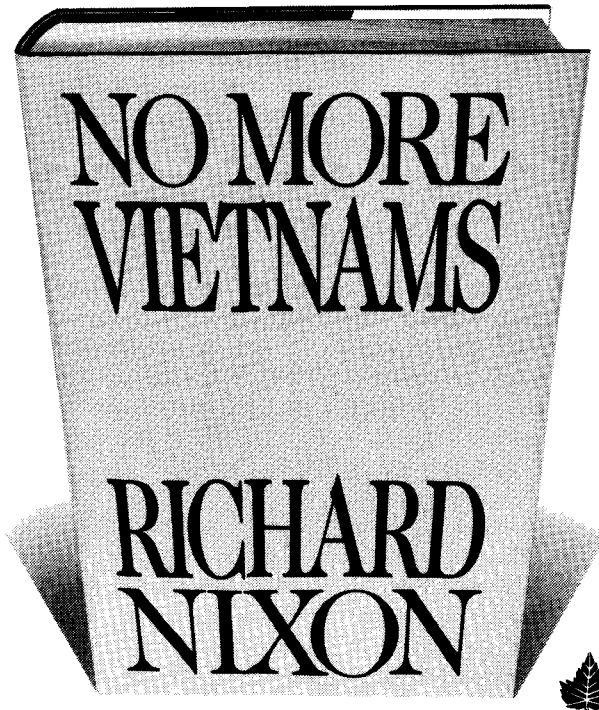

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both dour and emotional. For him—and I speak without rancor—the cause had inflated itself into a cultic attachment. On one occasion he had grown misty with feeling while telling me how Aboriginal children of mixed parentage had been, within living memory, forcibly taken away from their homes, herded onto trucks, hosed down; and thus sanitized, sent off to institutions to be reeducated in the ways of the white man. It was not his ardor of which I disapproved, but rather the assumption that such wrongs eliminated the need for all further introspection. His retrospective "white" pain, his guilt, sufficed, nullifying any inquiry that might threaten to sour his commitment. Like all cultists, his behavior was erratic, veering about as devotional duty dictated. You could never tell what he was thinking, because by his own admission he didn't think a great deal. A slave to his emotions, he merely served.

UNDER A TREE some blacks were setting up an array of technical equipment—drums, electrical guitars, amplifiers. There was a surge of interest when a man, naked to the waist, loins wrapped in a cloth, skin powdered, arrived with a didgeridoo. The cameramen and sound recordists converged upon him. With some difficulty—the inventors of the didgeridoo couldn't have been expected to anticipate this particular challenge—he managed to aim his unwieldy instrument at a microphone and embark on a sequence of hollow trumpetings. When he was done, there was enthusiastic applause, mainly from the urban section of the gathering. Perhaps encouraged by this, he started up again. A pretty girl of mixed descent, her torso wrapped in the folds of an Aboriginal flag, paraded around the fringes of the square. To more applause the didgeridoo player, having completed his encore, retired from the scene. His place was taken by a troupe of daubed dancers. Again the cameramen and sound recordists converged. My attention was seduced by another adolescent of indeterminate race whose T-shirt was emblazoned with the epicene features of Michael Jackson. I watched her watching the daubed dancers, stomping out, I presumed, rhythms rooted in the Dreamtime. Her expression was no different from that worn by most of the assembled tourists—a sort of puzzled, faintly respectful, faintly embarrassed diffidence. Was the Earth really her Mother? Was her emotional and physical well-being really determined by her need to be in harmony with the natural environment?

The oratory began. After several months in Australia I was familiar enough with its content (. . . 40,000 years of culture . . . the death symbolized by landlessness . . .) to be able to pay only intermittent attention. It was impossible not to take account of the fact that most of the speakers were of mixed ancestry and of comparatively light complexion—individuals whose aboriginality had undergone progressive dilution over generations. None of them looked as if they had done a bit of hunting and food-gathering. Not recently anyway. How real could the connection be between these citified gentry of the cause and those dusty, stick-legged, dark-skinned ones who squatted so patiently on the flagstones? By what bonds of sympathy and desire and cultural affinity were they linked?

"This is the decade of the Aboriginal," shouted one of the speakers.

"Right on! Right on!" chorused the girl in the Michael Jackson T-shirt.

"The Land doesn't belong to us," shouted a woman with a Chinese cast of countenance. "We belong to the Land."

"Right on! Right on!" The flag-draped girl, unfurling herself, skipped around the square.

The members of the band twanged their guitar strings, peered at the dials on their consoles, adjusted levels. Later that morning in Raintree Square, 40,000 years of culture, of sacred communion with the Antipodean earth, blossomed into the amplified rhythms of country and western music.

I drifted slowly back through the steamy morning to my hotel, going past the pub consecrated not to 40,000 years of Aboriginal cultural, but to two centuries of Aboriginal defeat: there, behind the glass doors, over glasses of beer and rough wine, the last rites were being played out.

IT IS one thing to reinterpret and rewrite the Aboriginal past, to reach a new understanding of the virtues (and vices) of a society so long ignored and denigrated: Trollopian presumption deserves to be discredited. No harm is done if the settler kingdom should experience tremors of anxiety and see its own past in a different, less than heroic light. Self-knowledge may be alarming, but without it we remain in a state of arrested development, prey to spurious vanities not worth the cost of the ink and the stone used to celebrate them. But it is quite another thing, in the name of restitution, to deform our vision of the present and its needs, to invoke afresh cultures and identities ravaged by time and contact and powerlessness. These attempted acts of restoration are not merely dishonest: they are cruel. Too much has happened.

I AM prepared to believe that there are many Aborigines who wish to escape the clutches of the settler state, to take themselves out into the desert places—if only on weekends—and do their thing. The sublimated racism that underwrites and encourages this phenomenon is highly amusing, if only because its theorists would recoil in horror from the suggestion that they were guilty of any such dereliction. But how else is one to interpret this confining of the Aboriginal in his aboriginality? There are a dozen fashionable ways, of course, of dressing up this flight from the burdens of reality. Ours is an age cursed with the impulse to self-realization, and our vocabulary is rich. (In Australia, as I discovered, self-realization extends even to the vegetation of the place. There are those who would expel every alien growth and plant gum trees and saltbush everywhere; the landscape too must be allowed to be true to itself.) But the escape into an adventure playground of timelessness, of goannas and kangaroos and red earth, the running off into a world of unalterable Aboriginal essences—this racially based tuning in and dropping out—is a condescending and profoundly flawed prescription for regeneration. Either the Aboriginal is or is not a citizen of Australia. And if he is (which is the case), he must face the consequences. It is not a "race" that cries out for rescue, but the victims of a historical process, thousands of men and women and children.

When even lost tribes that have not yet been taught shame by the white man harbor in their midst little boys called Thomas, we ought to take pause. The modern world is too near, too pressing. At best, atavism is a harmless fantasy, not sustainable with any degree of persistent realism under skies crisscrossed by satellites and jet aircraft. At worst, it must be considered a

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tragedy—a failure of nerve. Defeat ought not to be confounded with, or explained away by, self-realization. In any case, the call of the wild certainly cannot provide any answers for those—the majority—with substantial infusions of Chinese or Irish or Scottish blood. It takes a practiced eye to discern the aboriginality of many of these town-dwelling, Christianized, Australianized representatives of the "race" whose genetic exoticism and de facto assimilation make absurd all those claims to mystical sensibilities and vulnerabilities.

When I was in the pastoral town of Rockhampton, I heard a most singular cri de coeur from an improbable quarter. The Cattlemen's Association wanted to find out who decides who is an Aboriginal. Could someone, preferably someone in Canberra—one of the chief sacred sites of the cause—please tell them. My heart was not wrung by their perplexity. The cattlemen of Rockhampton, I think, were being a trifle hypocritical and disingenuous. The settlerdom of which, historically, they were so conspicuous a vanguard, whose pioneering exploits had swollen into tales of mythological proportions, had sown the seeds of their trumped-up dilemma by contemptuously assigning to the wilderness of aboriginality anyone with the slightest admixture of indigenous blood. Their forebears were among those who had carried out the original classification.

The cause of the cattlemen's distress was plain enough. Apart from the restitutional terrors of Land Rights and Sacred Sites (provoking nightmares of sudden dispossession), they looked with taxpaying despair at the amount of money being expended on Aboriginal uplift and comfort. Nowadays in Australia it pays to be "Aboriginal." Hearts ache for those millions of dollars lavished on such bodies as the National Aboriginal Conference, the Aboriginal Development Commission, the Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and so on. The cattlemen shake their heads at all those programs for Aboriginal health, Aboriginal employment, Aboriginal legal aid, training, culture, recreation, "social support." Indignant voices clamor. Who are these so-called Aboriginals? *Please* tell us!

Yet whatever the motives of those who ask it, the question is a good one. After 200 years of European occupation and culture shock, it is a question that even a "full blood" (defined thus by my Australian dictionary: "1. an individual of unmixed ancestry esp. for dark-skinned peoples as Aborigines, negroes, etc. 2. purebred, esp. of horses") might well put to himself. But he can only do so with profit if he is allowed—and allows himself—to break free from the sublimated racism that would imprison people in their imagined essences; that would convert into a kind of substance that mockery of an idea summed up by the term "black." (We can say the same about the use of "white." The man who is merely "white" is no less a prisoner than the man who is merely "black.") Racial metaphysics is a cul-de-sac.

What should I, in the light (perhaps I should say darkness) of this debased coding, make of myself? I am, after all, a man of "full-blooded" Indian ancestry. Should I therefore put on a dhoti? Should I take myself up to a cave in the foothills of the Himalayas and surrender myself to the contemplation of the transmigration of souls? After a century of separation from the

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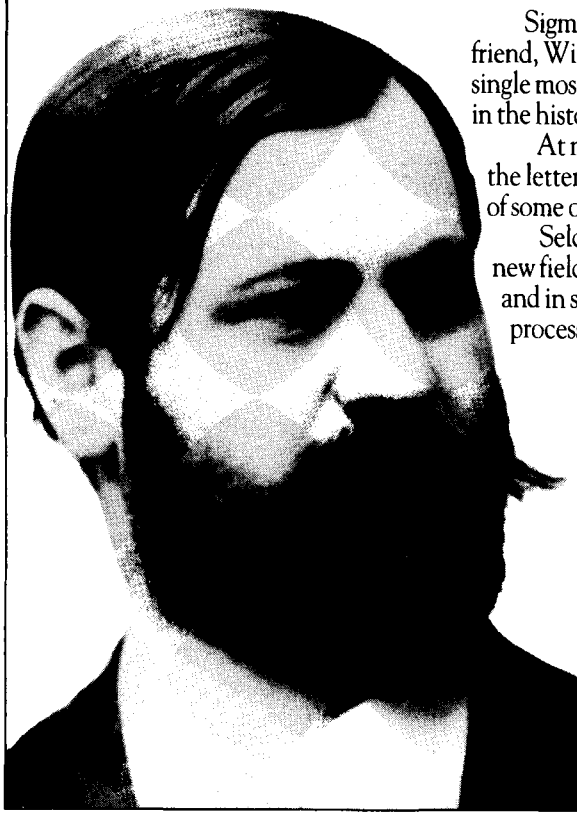

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motherland, a century of confusion and disintegration, my racial essence has offered no clues to the dilemmas I have had to face. In Sydney I met a young man of Mediterranean complexion and features. In fact, he was partly of Spanish ancestry—but of course, he referred to himself as "Aboriginal." He was well educated, urbane, at ease in every way—so far as I could tell—with the life of the city. This young man wanted to be an artist. He showed me some of his work. I stared, with intensifying incredulity and sadness, at his drawings of serpents, enigmatic birds, lizards . . . resurrected out of the Dreamtime. Such was his art; such was his universe of "meaningfulness." It was in Sydney, too, that I saw a little group of Aboriginal Rastafarians standing on a street corner. Not for them the Dreamtime, but mere universalized blackness. "I and I want to be free," declaimed an Aboriginal poetess, resorting to the Rastafarian dialect of her Jamaican brothers, ". . . for I Aborigine . . . Never will I lose my identity . . ." So she chanted at the official opening of an Aboriginal Arts Centre in one of Sydney's inner districts.

The flight into aboriginality, into blackness, is a flight into despair, an escape from the challenges of history.

DOWN THE TUBES

No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior by Joshua Meyrowitz

(Oxford University Press, 432 pp., $18.95)

Unless he or she is at work or asleep, the average American—i.e., just about any one of us—is probably watching TV. This eerie fact is no longer news, and for that very reason its full significance is hard to grasp. Staring, over dinner, at Dan Rather's face, or at an ad for Tums, or at a rerun of "Three's Company," you would hardly think that this boring modern habit, casually indulged by all, has changed the world with revolutionary thoroughness. Because it is now the cynosure of every eye, TV has not only absorbed our electoral politics and become, through its advertising, the very basis of our economy. It has also hit us, so to speak, right where we live. The ways we stand and move and dress, our conversation, our relationships, even (or especially) our thoughts, have surely been affected somehow by our national pastime.

Ostensibly, the purpose of Joshua Meyrowitz's book is to encourage other students of the media to undertake a grand appraisal of TV's massive social influence. (The book also deals, here and there, with radio, the telephone, and the computer.) A professor of communications, the author seems to have written *No Sense of Place* primarily for his academic colleagues, to urge them away from the usual niggling scrutiny of TV's content (TV's depiction of women/violence/the family/the poor/the rich, etc.), toward the wider study of TV's form. Invoking Marshall McLuhan, Meyrowitz suggests that TV affects us most not through its images of this institution or that ethnic group, but through its basic formal properties—its documentary truthfulness, its easy legibility, its presence right in every home. Because these are the televisual features that have transformed our whole social world, they are also, the author holds, the proper objects of study by the social scientist.

At first, then, this book seems no more remarkable, or for that matter, readable, than any other ex-dissertation meant mainly to certify the author's membership in his own professional confraternity. Certainly Meyrowitz has not done much to make his discourse very appealing to the nonspecialist. The book is far too long, and was never translated out of the grotesque technospeak that Meyrowitz was evidently forced to learn in graduate school: "situation segregation," "interaction setting," "high status onstage role performance," and many other such phrases keep the uninitiated reader in submission.

There is, however, something going on beneath this deadening veneer of jargon. As we slog through Meyrowitz's abundant prose, we begin to notice that his mechanical voice carries a strange messianic undertone. Although the author routinely qualifies the points of his analysis in order to suggest a "balanced" study, his book actually promotes the euphoric view, derived from McLuhan, that the electronic media—and TV most of all—have opened up the whole world to everybody in it. Before this recent liberation—that is, until the sixties—human intercourse was merely a matter of people talking to each other in the same physical space. This universal reliance on "face-to-face interaction" enabled the construction of all sorts of social barriers, because one's physical placement would always express and delimit one's social place. Society was divided into "public" and "private," "upstairs" and "below-stairs," or as Meyrowitz puts it, using Erving Goffman's terminology, "front region" and "back region."

Such divisions, furthermore, were reinforced by the long tyranny of print, a demanding and exclusive medium that imposed a rigid social hierarchy onto the free-for-all that had been the Middle Ages. After the invention of the printing press, women were kept illiterate and thereby subjugated by literate men, and children came to be regarded as a separate class, their gradual admittance into adulthood based on their ability to read more and more skillfully. Moreover, print kept social reality concealed under a daunting facade of abstract terms.

BUT NOW, Meyrowitz points out repeatedly, the electronic media have blasted away all those ancient obstructions. Because radio, TV, the telephone, and the computer can transmit their signals into any sanctum, you can now participate in a common life without ever leaving home, or bed, or jail. Conversely, it's now all but impossible to keep the whole wired world from breaking in. And as the electronic media have undermined the old privileges of physical place, so have they freed us from the bondage of print. Unlike books, TV can be deciphered with equal ease by babies, teens, and old folks of every race, class, and I.Q. Because TV

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thus reveals everything to everyone at once, the print-induced hierarchies can no longer be sustained, nor can the authorities of yesteryear preserve themselves in mystery.

Meyrowitz, then, sees "a new social order" taking vague shape around TV. Now that the electronic media have shown us all the same real world without its erstwhile verbal disguise, we are all becoming blissfully alike. "Male and female roles are merging," racism is in decline, children and adults are indistinguishable, and our political leaders now behave as informally before the cameras as they do while washing up. Thus "the widespread social upheavals of the 1960's," generated mainly by TV, have actually continued, bringing us ever closer to a wholly mediated utopia where there can be no more bigotry or war.

WHAT'S wrong with this picture? While it is true that TV has pulled us all into its orbit, and also true that it helped to make the sixties what they were, TV did not reverse the direction of modern culture. It only fulfilled a process that had begun long before the medium's triumph. Advancing a theory of technological determinism, Meyrowitz argues that it is the electronic media that "turn once private spaces into more public ones," an opening-up that he believes is something new. And yet the impulse to make all places permeable and homogeneous antedated by many years the advent of TV or radio. On his return visit to this country in 1904, for instance, Henry James was struck "at every turn" by what he called the "inveterate suppression of almost every outward exclusory arrangement." American architecture appeared to James as the result of "a conspiracy for nipping the interior in the bud, for denying its right to exist, for ignoring and defeating it in every possible way."

Similarly, the eponymous hero of Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*, published in 1922, is already celebrating what Meyrowitz calls the "decline in the difference between here and there," although that fictitious booster was conceived decades before the rise of video. Quoting the versifier Chum Frink, Babbitt extols the vast sameness of America's hotels:

> But when I get that longing spell, I simply seek the best hotel, no matter in what town I be—St. Paul, Toledo, or K.C., in Washington, Schenectady, in Louisville or Albany. And at that inn it hits my dome that I again am right at home. . . . So when Sam Satan makes you blue, good friend, that's what I'd up and do, for in these States where'er you roam, you never leave your home sweet home.

As such evidence makes clear, the American impulse toward universal standardization was already manifest early in this century. It was this impulse, and not TV, that began to erode the "sense of place" in America, where, over 80 years ago, James could perceive little difference between "the Pullmans that are like rushing hotels and the hotels that are like stationary Pullmans." Moreover, this impulse was realized openly and eagerly by the spokesmen for American business, who did all they could to standardize the elements of public life, and to invade the sphere of the private, for the sake of ever-growing profits. Indeed, TV itself was foreseen by those businessmen as a great money-making instrument. "Then will come television," wrote one typically fervent adman in 1929, "creating a new advertising medium, fast, graphic, and universal in its language, a new competition for the publisher and the lithographer."

IN ORDER to sustain his McLuhanite thesis, Meyrowitz must simply ignore TV's cultural and ideological background. As he sees it, TV came out of nowhere, caused by nothing, causing everything. According to this heroic conception, TV is a pure force, like sunlight, exerting its global benefits in a disinterested and automatic way. In other words, the author regards the medium as somehow wholly separable from its commercial purpose. He raises the issue of TV's commercialism early on, but only to dismiss it, and then proceeds to emphasize what he regards as TV in its essential state—a perfectly transparent means of aural and visual transmission, always as trustworthy as a keyhole, or a window, or your own eyes.

Because Meyrowitz never questions TV's veracity, *No Sense of Place* is as limited in its formal analysis as it is historically inaccurate. The author consistently overestimates TV's communicative potential, asserting repeatedly that there is no difference at all between direct experience and the simulacra beamed at us by the networks. And, while taking TV's images for reality itself, Meyrowitz dismisses "print" images as inherently false.

"Unlike the abstractions of words such as 'sportsmanlike' or 'bravery' in books or on radio, television gives a down-to-earth, gritty, and demystified image of the male world." Where exactly is this "gritty" TV spectacle of "the male world" (whatever that is)? On "The A-Team"? On "The Dukes of Hazzard"? On the ads for Miller Lite? "In a print culture," writes the author at another point, children are fed "a sanitized vision of social reality," whereas TV exposes them to "many topics, such as sex and drugs." But what "vision of social reality" could be more "sanitized" than what TV gives us? Even with all its titillating emphasis on "sex and drugs," its incessant growl-

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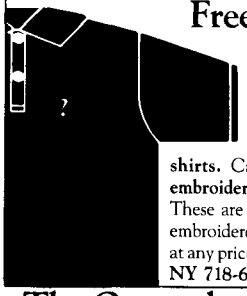

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ing about "hookers" and "coke" and "street-value," TV still shows us a world where, by and large, everyone and everything is antiseptic, clear, and simple. Despite TV's near-total blandness, Meyrowitz is convinced that the "electronic media are more intimate, personal, and revealing than print media," that TV "provides a rich, personal profile of the communicator," as if we now know just as much about the inner lives of Ronald Reagan, Peter Jennings, and Clara Peller as we might know about Proust's characters, or about our closest friends.

Such assertions abound throughout this book, suggesting that the author prepared to write about TV without bothering to watch it. Over and over again he betrays a perfect inability to notice TV's typical moves, all of which are meant to keep every viewer in the anxious mood to buy. For example: "Television fosters a kind of easy and uninvolved intimacy." Thus Meyrowitz writes in arguing that TV brings the sexes into mutual amity because it "allows" each of us "to stare at and carefully examine the face, body, and movements of the other sex." In fact, TV does not "allow" such voyeurism, but demands it, working ceaselessly to keep its male viewers hot and hungry, its female viewers completely insecure, by broadcasting whenever possible "the face, body, and movements" of some glossy, pouting televisual Amazon. That tantalizing display does not invite "a kind of easy and uninvolved intimacy," nor is it meant to.

It is on the basis of this general misreading of TV that Meyrowitz has drawn his dubious conclusions about "the impact of the electronic media on social behavior." The most that can be said for his vision of TV's pacific social influence is that it's a bit premature. Meyrowitz mistakes a certain widespread stylistic homogenization—accelerated, it is true, largely by TV—for a sign that this is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius. But the fact that many working women now wear three-piece suits does not alter the more important fact that men and women often treat each other as combatants, or the fact that rape is on the rise. Similarly, while it might be true "that many adults who have come of age within the last twenty years continue to speak, dress, and act much like overgrown children," this does not mean that "the present trend is to treat children more like 'little adults.' " On the contrary, if there is any "present trend" in the treatment of children, it entails regarding them not as adults, or even as human beings, but as handy playthings, easy to use and throw away.

While the electronic media do indeed homogenize our various traits, they certainly have not carried us beyond aggression. In fact, there is plenty of current evidence that we can surrender to our TVs and PCs without also losing our hostility. Contrary to Meyrowitz's vision of a universal brotherhood enabled by the media, racism and anti-Semitism, for example, are far from dead in this country. It is worth recalling that TV and the computer have become the most effective tools of the American ultraright. And perhaps more important, it is also likely that the electronic media actually provoke our mutual suspicion and belligerence, intensifying an apocalyptic climate by making us feel both menaced and helpless in an alien land of "smart machines" and jarring TV newscasts.

NEVERTHELESS, there is no discord in Professor Meyrowitz's mediated paradise. Still, it's hard to see why anyone would want to go on living in it. What is most disturbing, finally, about *No Sense of Place* is its implicit celebration of an emerging world as bleak and empty as the author's prose. In this image-ridden wasteland, all of us will lead our indistinguishable lives in a state of total mutual surveillance, although there won't be anything worth seeing. Now all private realms, previously separate, will converge into one nondescript and boundless space. Here (or "here") everyone will be free to spend all his or her time gaping calmly into a computer terminal, since there won't be anything else to do. Already, the author notes contentedly, "work and play have begun to merge in our electronic age. Both children and adults now spend many hours a week staring at video monitors, whether video games or electronic spreadsheets."

"One way to characterize ourselves, then," Meyrowitz concludes improbably, "is as 'hunters and gatherers of an information age.' " Thus "we may be returning to a world even older than that of the late middle ages"—a world without social barriers or territorial loyalties, but one in which we will all forage peaceably for data, not for food. But

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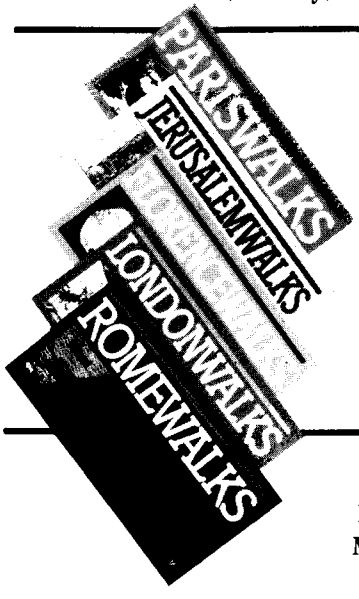

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this utopian formulation, like *No Sense of Place* throughout, denies certain crucial facts about the electronic media. Unlike the wandering tribes of yore, we viewers have almost no communal life, because the media are predicated on—and often reinforce—our separation from each other. And while those early gatherers led arduous, sensuous lives, all our so-called "interactions" via telephone/TV/computer are completely disembodied, and therefore charmless, functional, abstract. But such disembodiment is not a problem for Meyrowitz, since the "electronic media," he thinks, "lead to a form of interaction that was once found exclusively in immediate physical interaction." This equation is preposterous, and also sinister. *No Sense of Place* was written for those who can no longer sense the all-important difference between talking heads and living faces.

MARK CRISPIN MILLER

DUCHESS OF LETTERS

This Real Night by Rebecca West

(Viking, 266 pp., $16.95)

Long before she died in 1983, at the age of 90, Rebecca West had become the dowager duchess of English letters. Throughout an industrious career, she turned her capable hand to a great diversity of tasks and forms: political journalism, fiction, literary criticism, biography, crime reporting (especially the crime of treason), a travel book, and, seemingly without having to catch her breath, weekly book reviews for British periodicals as different as *The New Statesman* and *The Sunday Telegraph*. No subject fazed her, and nothing threatened her supreme, unshakable self-confidence.

Reading through Rebecca West's huge body of work, one is struck by the ferocious assurance of her judgments, which she did not hesitate to pass on everything. Even at 82, her certainty was undiminished. She could sound like a hanging judge: "I am rather bored with Iris Murdoch . . . I don't like John Osborne. I don't like Beckett. Edward Albee is pretentious stuff, rubbish. Arthur Miller is ghastly." There *were* writers she liked—Muriel Spark, Harold Pinter, Solzhenitsyn—but she was really in her element delivering the coup de grace to sacred cows.

Had she kept the sweetly prissy name she was given at birth, Cicily Fairfield, it is unlikely that Rebecca West would have become the kind of writer she was. Names have mysterious power. When at 19, already a dedicated feminist and socialist, she took her pseudonym from the strong-minded, idealistic heroine of Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*, she acquired the persona she needed for the life and career she was determined to have. As a very young and aggressively embattled journalist writing on behalf of women's suffrage and social justice, she declared with characteristic bluntness in the feminist paper *The Freewoman*: "A strong hatred is the best lamp to bear in our hands as we go over the dark places of life, cutting away the dead things men tell us to revere."

Her crusading passion went hand in hand with a very lively intellectual curiosity that was in no way dulled by her lack of a university degree. West's first book, published in 1916 when she was 24, dealt with a subject surprising for the time—Henry James. When James died that year, he was far from being the revered literary icon he would become after the Second World War. Most of his books were out of print and his fame had severely withered. With perfect aplomb, Rebecca West chose one of the most complex of modern novelists on which to try her skill as a feminist critic. Though she rebuked James for refusing "to dramatize in his imagination anything concerning women save their failures and successes as sexual beings"—a dubious notion—she was also capable of finding more in his work than the tendentious evidence she was looking for in a male novelist. Despite her impatience with James's supposedly narrow view of women, she was a discerning critic who could appreciate the profound originality of his art.

West had her own ambitions as a novelist, and two years later she published *The Return of the Soldier*, a short tale about a shell-shocked English officer. At first glance it is not the kind of novel one might have expected from a feminist intellectual. Though the central idea came from the horrors of battle—the last 15 years of Captain Baldry's life have been erased from his memory by his experience in the trenches—the story begins less as a denunciation of war than as a delicate celebration of one simple woman's goodness against the vanity and self-centered snobbery of the others fighting over the crippled mind of the soldier. Though the artlessly good woman hovers at the edge of sentimentality, in the end West showed just how tough a view of things she possessed, her youth notwithstanding. Goodness must surrender to the sane imperatives of reality, and the amnesiac officer is forced to remember the unalterable truth of the life—and the shallow wife—he had forgotten. It is a sternly unromantic conclusion. *The Return of the Soldier* is a marvel of compression, and it revealed a dramatic and moral assurance remarkable for so young a writer.

YET, OF THE nine novels Rebecca West eventually wrote, this short book is perhaps the only one worth reading today. It is hard to figure out why none of her later fiction lived up to the perfectly realized debut. If a novelist's strength depends on the ability to tell an absorbing story and to portray the intricacies of human character, West undeniably had both talents in abundance—but they flowered in her journalism and travel writing, not in her novels, which, with that one luminous exception, lack the commanding sense of life she conveyed elsewhere.

Mollie Panter-Downes has observed, about the gulf between Rebecca West's fiction and journalism, that "for some puzzling reason, [her] art needed the steel scaffolding of facts on which to build the unique structure of narrative and ideas she fills with human beings who convince us in every word and look that this was how they were, and not otherwise." Paradoxically, even when a work of fiction was indissolubly

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linked to actual events in her life, it remained inert as an effort of the imagination. *Judge*, for one example, was written in the early 1920s, when West was thick in the heat of her scandalous affair with H. G. Wells, which had produced the further scandal of an illegitimate son. Yet the novel, which is about a tormented mother and her illegitimate son, turned into melodramatic hokum that bears scant resemblance to any recognizable human world.

Equally weak is the autobiographical trilogy that West began writing in the 1950s—*The Fountain Overflows* and the newly published second volume, *This Real Night*—about her poverty-stricken childhood; her brilliant but unstable father, a military man turned journalist; her long-suffering mother, once a concert pianist. But this family saga derives little vitality or nourishment from its source in the years remembered. Only the last few pages of *This Real Night* (a rare lapse of West's genius for titles), describing the death of the mother, leave any trace in the mind; and the dialogue is as wooden as a lumberyard. The one intriguing character, the immensely rich Jew Mr. Morpurgo, who befriends the unfortunate family, remains half-finished. West was able to write only fragments of the third volume, which the Viking Press will publish "in due course." Is such solicitous piety really necessary?

IF THE events of her private life proved unyielding in Rebecca West's novels, one might have thought that her creative intelligence would be more fruitfully spurred by the public world of politics. As Stendhal wrote, "Politics in a work of literature is like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert. Something loud and vulgar, and yet a thing to which it is not possible to refuse one's attention." A shrewd and knowledgeable student of political behavior, West was fascinated by Boris Nicolaievsky's *Aseff, The Russian Judas*, the biography of a double agent who was both a revolutionary terrorist and an agent of the Tsarist secret police. As a factual point of departure, what could have seemed a more perfect challenge to the imagination of Rebecca West, one of the world's experts on the devious masks of espionage?

Unfortunately, though there is endless talk in *The Birds Fall Down* (1966) *about* politics, the "loud and vulgar" noise that can seize the attention is never heard. Perhaps the pistol wasn't loaded to begin with. The bulk of the novel consists of a very long conversation, on a train in northern France, between a formidable Tsarist aristocrat and a Russian nobleman-turned-terrorist. They spar and they feint and they pelt each other with the irreconcilable motives and consequences of their views about Russia, God, anarchism, society, and man. However dramatic and revelatory this encounter may have been to Rebecca West, its inherent promise is foiled by repetitiousness and her digressive fascination with irrelevant details and characters. More to the point, by failing to sharply define her own involvement in this clash of inimical ideas and personalities, she made the conversation sound tentative rather than historically momentous. The pace of the story is much too leisurely for the locomotive of history to get moving. There are those who believe that, as a novel about revolutionary politics, *The Birds Fall Down* belongs in the class of *The Possessed* and *Under Western Eyes*. But West lacked that passionate engagement with the revolutionary mind, however much they despised and feared it, which enabled Dostoevsky and Conrad to explore it with such illuminating power.

ON THE literary spectrum, the travel book lies somewhere between the high art of the novel and "mere" journalism. How much it leans toward one extreme or the other depends, of course, on the writer. Especially in England, the travel book developed into a great and eccentric tradition with the work of such intrepid wanderers as Richard Burton, Charles Doughty, Gertrude Bell, D. H. Lawrence, Patrick Leigh-Fermor, among many others, for whom the record of a journey was also an occasion for self-discovery, historical speculation, sexual revelation, and assorted nuttiness.

Rebecca West's magnum opus, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, is very much part of this baggy genre. It is an account of her travels through the mountains, cities, and disparate nationalistic souls of Yugoslavia, a country for which she had discovered a strange affinity the year before. On one level it is a recollection of persons and places, architecture and landscape, as vividly immediate as a documentary film. But beyond the verbal pictures, Rebecca West conceived the book as an omnium-gatherum of ideas that had long been germinating in her mind about history and civilization, the unending and fitfully victorious battle against barbarism, the opposition of Eastern and Western culture and morality, and the sense of her own place in time.

EUROPE was staring into the black mouth of catastrophe, and she urgently wanted "to put on paper what a typical Englishwoman felt and thought in the late 1930s when, already convinced of the inevitability of the second Anglo-German war, she had been able to follow the dark waters of that event back to its source." Untypically, this Englishwoman was equipped with an erudite abundance of ancient and modern history, and a boldly speculative mind that could swoop and plunge around and about the nature of evil and man's capacity for self-destruction. Her pessimism, as the war began, was tempered only by the flickering hope held out by art that "history may change its spots and man become honourable." All this only begins to suggest the copiousness of image, detail, and idea that West packed into *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*.

It has been called her masterpiece, and up to a point there is no reason to quarrel with this judgment. The point at which one begins to have doubts is not on any single page, but in those moments when West breaks away from concrete description and soars into the overwrought air of hyperbole. Her generalizations then seem not merely sweeping, but swept of sense altogether. Her prose, never plain at the best of times, turns florid with self-importance, and she is writing melodrama, not history. To give only one example, there is the chilling episode in Macedonia when she comes upon gypsies sacrificing a black lamb, in a fertility rite, on a blood-smeared rock. She describes the repellent scene with such outraged exactitude that nothing more need be said. But she goes on for pages, hitting us over the head again and again with her interpretation—religious, psychological historical, moral—of this superstitious slaughter. With righteous literalness she cannot forbear pointing out that "women do not get children by adding to the normal act of copulation the slaughter of a lamb," and then segues into a grandiose apostrophe: "I knew this rock well. I had lived under the shadow of it all my life. All our Western thought is founded on this repulsive

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pretense that pain is the proper price of any good thing . . ." (All Western thought? No exceptions?) This salvo in turn swells into a flaming malediction, worthy of the Grand Inquisitor, against Martin Luther, "who was the rock, with the sullied grass, the cocks' heads, the grease, the stinking blood," and so on. Potent prose, certainly; but she is supposed to be thinking, not howling, and the putative thought in this passage, as in many others, is too bombastic to be taken seriously.

REBECCA WEST did indeed need the restraint provided by "a steel scaffolding of facts," and nowhere could she have found a better locus for her gifts than in a court of law. Her fondness for windy generalities and hortatory moralism was kept in check by the slow day-to-day unwinding of the legal process of justice, a situation that concentrated her mind wonderfully. After the war, journalistic assignments took her to the law courts of Germany, England, and the United States, where she covered the trials of the Nazi war criminals, British traitors like William Joyce, ordinary murderers, and a lynch mob in South Carolina. In the claustrophobic atmosphere of the courtroom she was ruthlessly observant, and seemed at eerie moments to have slipped inside the skull of the criminals in the dock to bring us the bad news from those warped and sordid minds.

Rebecca West's writings as a trial reporter were first assembled in two extraordinary volumes—*The Meaning of Treason* (1947) and *A Train of Powder* (1955)—which do not seem in the least dated or stale today. Her brilliant account of the trial for high treason of the Irishman William Joyce (who as Lord Haw-Haw had beamed the vilest pro-Nazi propaganda at England from Berlin) became much more than the report of a trial: the revelation of a twisted life and personality as gripping and psychologically convincing as the highest order of thriller. The chronicle of a murder case, "Mr. Setty and Mr. Hume," is packed with unforgettable sketches of the people she encountered in her slow retracing of what actually happened.

Some years later she returned to her investigation of treason, realizing it would be seriously incomplete if it did not examine the Communist spies of the 1950s—Klaus Fuchs, Allen Nunn May, Gordon Lonsdale, the Rosenbergs, that undynamic duo Burgess and Maclean, among others—who had engaged in espionage for the Soviet Union. In *The New Meaning of Treason* (1964) she greatly expanded the earlier volume with brilliantly engrossing accounts of those shady dealings in military secrets, and she made you see not only how but why a person becomes willing to betray his country. In her closely reasoned consideration of the huge range of seditious crime, during and after the war, she made an eloquent case against treason not only as a subversive threat to the state but as an assault on liberty and civilization.

SUCH conclusions did not, of course, sit well with left-wing intellectuals of the time. She had long since rejected the ideological socialism of her youth, and the simpleminded views of radical orthodoxy were increasingly distasteful to Dame Rebecca as she grew older. Yet she never ceased to insist on her unflagging commitment to feminism. This raises an interesting question. Why have contemporary feminists paid so little attention to Rebecca West, who was fighting for the cause before their mothers were born? Not that she has been totally neglected: the Virago Press in England, which has been resurrecting forgotten books by modern women, has gradually been reprinting all her work, much of it long out of print. An American scholar, Jane Marcus, recently collected in *The Young Rebecca* many of the high-spirited articles and essays she wrote in her early twenties. Yet West, to take only two examples of the general feminist indifference to her as a writer, is barely mentioned in Ellen Moers's *Literary Women*, and patronized in passing by Mary Ellmann in *Thinking of Women*.

Nettled, Dame Rebecca complained in 1975 that "no Women's Lib people have ever shown the slightest interest in me," and made a shrewd guess about the reasons: "I found it difficult to read Kate Millett because I feel you want to argue with her on Marxism the whole time. She is not pure liberation." West's fiercely outspoken anti-communism must account in large part for the feminist aloofness—and wariness. She believed that Marxism promised the opposite of liberation to women, and she rightly felt that the alliance of the women's movement with radical politics was a betrayal of feminism.

But perhaps there was another factor—her redoubtable personality. Feminists have often sought out brilliant, unhappy women of the past who can serve as exemplary indictments of male-dominated society. But Rebecca West was altogether too robust, too hard-working, too independent, too resilient, too sure of herself, and after her marriage in 1930 to the investment banker Henry Maxwell Andrews, too rich, to be regarded as a victim of patriarchal repression. There was no chance that St. Rebecca would join St. Virginia and St. Sylvia in the pantheon of femi-

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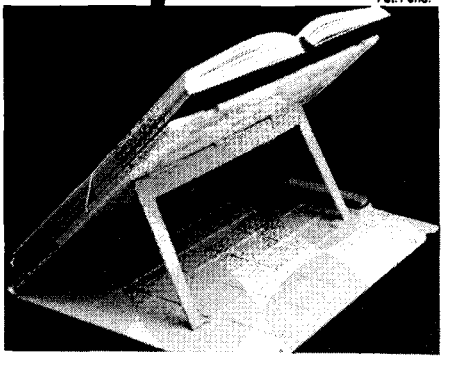

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nist martyrs. Even the humiliation she endured in the stormy ten-year entanglement with Wells did not give her the necessary accreditation, for she seemed to walk away from it without a scratch on her self-esteem or a dent in her energy.

Despite her productivity and erudition, despite all the critical adulation, Rebecca West never attained the highest rank in British intellectual life. She did not achieve the unquestioned intellectual authority of, say, Edmund Wilson, also a person-of-letters. This had nothing to do with her sex, or her excursions into journalism. Wilson, too, was a journalist some of the time. But there was also a tenacious solidity to Wilson's scholarship, a probity of historical and critical judgment, which one misses in Rebecca West. Her mind and her interests were eclectic and capricious. There was an undeniable flashiness in her thinking and her style, a tendency to inflate ideas beyond intellectual plausibility. Always a duchess, never a queen.

PEARL K. BELL

Pearl K. Bell is a writer who lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

NATTERING NUCLEAR NABOBS

Counsels of War
by Gregg Herken

(Knopf, 409 pp., $18.95)

The language of nuclear strategy strikes the uninitiated as obscure and arcane, with a pronounced tendency toward acronymphomania. Some take this as a natural manifestation of a black science. Others consider it sheer bad taste—an attempt to extract the human meaning from the consideration of nuclear destruction, to substitute abstract calculation for moral judgment.

The strategists protest. The subject is complicated, the subject is technical, the subject requires sober analysis rather than heady emotionalism. Nor is it remote from political reality. Something so fundamental to international affairs as the strategic balance needs the most intensive scrutiny, for mankind's future may turn on what appears to the layman as a trivial detail.

But while the bottom line, to use the preferred American term, may be crystal clear, if often somewhat predictable (either more arms or more arms control!), the premises and the reasonings are often cloudy. The suspicion remains that the obscure language and the obscure concepts serve a more sinister purpose: to keep these fundamental issues inaccessible to a wider audience. In a society in which you cannot keep sensitive matters secret, you can at least keep them incomprehensible.

To be sure, the strategists have not always comported themselves as mere seekers after truth and wisdom, concerned only to give the best possible specialist advice to those with the awesome responsibilities for the hard decisions on nuclear war and peace. In practice the strategists have often been lobbyists, propagandists, and even ideologists.

They should not be surprised, then, when those suspicious of their conclusions want to understand the analysis that precedes them. As the strategists have become more embroiled in public controversy, there has developed a greater curiosity about their assumptions and methods. Stanley Kubrick did as much as anyone to encourage suspicion of the influence of the civilian strategists with his Dr. Strangelove from the Bland Corporation. And Vietnam did not exactly help their reputation.

By the end of the 1960s the strategists were becoming divided among themselves, especially as a result of Vietnam, and they no longer enjoyed quite so much public respect. During the debate on anti-ballistic missiles in 1969 (an interesting precursor to the current controversy over President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative), the nuclear experts found themselves in the front-line of the political argument. Their specialism began to be scrutinized as much as their conclusions. When Donald Brennan of the Hudson Institute came before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to testify in favor of the Safeguard system, he suggested that it was unlikely that nonexperts could come to a sound judgment on the ABM issue, that indeed the issue might be too complex for him to explain. "You go right ahead and try, Doctor" said the chairman, Senator Fulbright.

With the subsequent debates over strategic arms control, the nuclear strategists have continued to command attention, and have excited a certain curiosity about their backgrounds, the influences on their thought, and their role in shaping security policies and our understanding of our nuclear condition. Gregg Herken has written a history of the nuclear strategists, starting with the initial reactions to the arrival of the atom bomb in 1945 and ending with President Reagan's "vision" of the elimination of offensive nuclear weapons by means of space-based defenses.

From Herken's title one might expect that the basic theme of the book would be the exposure of the true nature of the strategists' arguments, with the overlay of gobbledygook stripped away. But Herken, some of whose misgivings about the quality and the direction of their arguments are justified, never establishes convincingly that he really is dealing with professional warmongers, with people primarily concerned to prepare for war. With some notable exceptions, the overriding preoccupation has always been deterrence (though for many strategists deterrence requires, and quite rightly, a clear conception of what might happen if it fails).

IN HIS concluding paragraphs Herken suggests that the right questions about nuclear weapons have not been asked, and that the popular protest will at last put these questions on the agenda. It is true that the first-order questions—about the political and military utility of nuclear weapons—have not been raised as often as the second- and third-order questions—about the technical aspects that fascinate the professionals. Still, the fact is that in the best of the strategic literature those questions are recognized as central, and are discussed seriously. The answers given may not be very satisfactory; perhaps there are no very satisfactory an-

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swers. But Clausewitz's query about all war—"*De quoi s'agit-il?*"—is asked about nuclear war consistently. It is a shame that it is not asked in Herken's book. Because it is not, the great strategic debates form for Herken merely a kind of intrusive background against which a series of relevant and not so relevant stories may be told, about personal, scientific, and bureaucratic struggles. And the incidental detail, while often interesting, is marred by many inaccuracies that are simply astounding for a historian of Herken's reputation.

With such a large and varied cast of characters (Robert Oppenheimer, Bernard Brodie, Curtis Le May, Herman Kahn) and a period packed with such drama and incident (Hiroshima, Sputnik, Vietnam), there is plenty of raw material for a fascinating history. Herken certainly adds to our stock of anecdotes and insights about this period. Some of the shadier characters are illuminated, such as William Liscum Borden (who wrote one of the more imaginative early works on the atom bomb and then became a key figure in the removal of Oppenheimer's security clearance). Attention is usefully drawn to some key turning points in thinking, such as the recognition in the late 1950s by ertswhile proponents of defensive systems that these were going to be helpless against the coming missile threat. But Herken does not make the most of his opportunity.

PARTLY this is a problem of method. Herken has succumbed to an American approach to the writing of history that appears to have been influenced by television soap operas. Rather than carefully sifting and evaluating available evidence, which perhaps may be too much of a strain on a reader's concentration, Herken treats us to a disjointed series of meaningful vignettes, with context provided through flashbacks and previews. Of course anecdotes and lively quotation help to move any history along, but they should not be allowed to squeeze out more basic forms of historical analysis. Moreover, many of the quotations from interviews would have benefited from translation into plain English. What are we to make, to take one particularly bad example, of General Jasper Welch describing changes in nuclear war plans during the late 1970s as follows: "It kept the stay-away-from-cities operations, it kept the China stuff, and it kept the eastern Europe sort of thing"?

More seriously, Herken does not appear to be on top of the material that lies outside his interviews, and this leads to some very strange judgments. It is something of a surprise to discover that Henry Kissinger's *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* provided an intellectual justification for the Eisenhower administration's policy of massive retaliation. The shifts in, and complexities of, Bernard Brodie's views on tactical nuclear weapons are lost; instead, Herken consistently describes him as a dogged supporter of limited nuclear war. Herman Kahn's famous "escalation ladder" is given only 16 instead of its 42 rungs; and so on.

One of the more serious lapses concerns the fate of the Multi-Lateral Force in the 1960s, which has some similarities in conception to NATO's Intermediate Nuclear Force program of the 1980s, except that it was never actually implemented. One of the most authoritative books on the subject (John Steinbruner's *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision*) puts the end of the MLF in December 1964, after a meeting between President Johnson and British Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Herken seems to be very confused. He argues that the MLF saga was over by the summer of 1963. One's confidence in this judgment is further undermined when he suggests that this decline was pre-

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ceded by "France's split from NATO," which in fact did not take place until 1966; the establishment of a "secret Nuclear Planning Group," which was not secret and did not meet until 1967; and "frustrations encountered with the strategy of flexible response," which was again not formally adopted by NATO until 1967.

Herken's evidence consists merely of a meeting between President Kennedy and his security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, in the summer of 1963, in which Bundy said that "the MLF had had it" and the president replied sardonically, "Where have *you* been?" Now it is true that after a trip to Europe Bundy wrote a memorandum recommending that the initiative should be allowed to "fade away," but Steinbruner records that no "decisive action" was taken "to implement the fadeaway option"; the MLF had been revived by the time that President Johnson took office and it was the British (never mentioned by Herken) who played a vital role in killing it off.

This sloppiness on the MLF story is reflected in Herken's general confusion about the European dimension to nuclear strategy. Leaving aside the slight to European pride in a discussion of postwar strategic thinking that fails to mention Liddell Hart or Buchan or Gallois or Beaufre, there is little grasp of the central role played in the development of American strategic doctrine by the American nuclear guarantee to Europe. This is a failing shared with many American writers on the subject, but it makes for a distorted history.

It would be unfair to suggest that *Counsels of War* is a difficult or an unrewarding read. But the soap opera approach means that whenever Herken gets close to developing an interesting point he hurries on to something else, so that in the end we lack a sustained analysis of either the role of the nuclear strategists or the issues that they have been addressing.

LAWRENCE FREEDMAN

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EARTHBOUND AND FIRED-UP

What The Light Was Like
by Amy Clampitt

(Knopf, 110 pp., $14.95, $8.95 paper)

When a poet makes a striking debut, as Amy Clampitt did two years ago with *The Kingfisher*, it often happens that a second book dilutes rather than reinforces the effect of that new talent. So quickly does a strong voice accustom us to its accents that we seem to have been hearing it for years, and know it almost too well. Some readers, I suppose, will judge *What The Light Was Like* a disappointment. Because it is a book that merely extends but does not alter our sense of Clampitt's poetry, they will be impatient. What before seemed exuberantly literary may now seem bookish; what before was complex is now clotted; where earlier poems figured forth their meanings, the new poems decorate theirs.

None of this is true, but I can understand what might prompt such false impressions. From the start, Clampitt seemed a poet of extravagant gifts, and prodigal with them. But they were unwanted gifts—or unwanted by those readers used to the workshop whimsy, the surreal bleats, and drab earnest verse that have been the stock in trade of younger American poets for two decades. One gets the sense from Clampitt's poems of both attention paid and amplitude given; or as she puts it in a poem in this new book, of her being at once "earthbound" and "fired-up." She is a writer who has absorbed a great deal—from the landscape and lifeblood of literature, as well as from the encyclopedia of the eye's observations. And she writes as if she had likewise absorbed W. H. Auden's advice: "Be subtle, various, ornamental, clever,/And do not listen to those critics ever/Whose crude provincial gullets crave in books/Plain cooking made still plainer by plain cooks." *The Kingfisher* is all of those things, but that is not all it is. Half a dozen poems in that book are large, passionate, serious inquiries into those events—homely or tragic—in which experience gathers itself into idea. And no poem in that book, however playful, is without its darker strain. Clampitt's imagination is deeply historical, abidingly moral, but she looks at the world through language, so that what she sees is charged by the transforming power of metaphor.

METAPHOR is the figure of speech that embodies change, and it is change and process, borders and shorelines, in-between states, "the unrest whose home—*our* home—is motion," that are central to *What The Light Was Like*. Her style too, now more than before, is all in motion, the better to take the measure of such changes. Sentences take a deep breath and drift through stanzas of development, syntactically volute, rhythmically nervous. Her diction and allusions are a rich, heady brew. Different tones of voice—now of the feature story, now of the sublime—overlap. This is a book with some broader strokes ("The Godfather Returns to Color TV") and even more intricate detailing than before. Poems with a slight or occasional subject—there are several here—seem top-heavy with overwrought style. But that is rare. Clampitt's style, at its best, continually suprises by a fine excess, by its capacity for "the entire gorgeous, intractable realm of the forgotten,/the hieratic, the heraldic," as well as for "the gradual/the totally unexpected the counted on."

However jostled, a reader never loses his bearings. Stanzas, for this poet, are "little rooms/for turmoil to grow lucid in," and indeed her poems are each a series of refocusings: close-up and dissolve. She is a poet for whom order—large and small, the arrangement of details in a poem, of poems in a book, or of the moral perspectives brought to bear on both—is crucial. The poems in *What The Light Was Like* are grouped into five sections that move from "The Shore" to "The Hinterland" to "The Metropolis," and back again. What changes is not just the locale, but the register and the vantage, and the way

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Biases

LEBANON IS BACK in the news, and so Jonathan Randal's byline is back on the front page. Israel's troubles are clearly the kind of news Randal relishes reporting. Here's a typical breathless dispatch, which appeared recently in *The Washington Post*: "From this 'resistance fortress' of southern Lebanon," Shiite guerrillas "are attacking and killing an increasing number of Israeli troops." But he also goes on to tell us quite matter-of-factly that "before the Israeli invasion of June 1982," these Shiite villages and "their 15,000 residents were in the forefront of the fight against the Palestinian guerrillas who occupied southern Lebanon." In 1982, Randal continues, the Shiites had even greeted the victorious "Israelis with the traditional welcome of rose water and rice." Now, I have made myself a student of Randal's writings on the Middle East, and I don't remember him ever mentioning any sort of Shiite resistance to the six-year PLO occupation. His 300-page book on the extended Lebanese conflict, *Going All the Way*, hasn't a single word suggesting that there were any hostile relations between the indigenous Shiites and the occupying Palestinians, except for a cryptic allusion to some Shiites in Major Haddad's militia. In fact, from his newspaper reportage in the years prior to the invasion, you'd conclude that nobody had a legitimate grievance against the PLO to speak of. Oh yes, its rule in Lebanon, he wrote in 1981, was "kind of wild and woolly," and maybe some of its excitable young committed a bit of mayhem every so often. But resistance, or a cause for resistance? Not on your life. It would have contradicted the benign view of the PLO that Randal was assiduously promoting. So why does he suddenly feel obliged to write of a Shiite resistance to the Palestinians, of Shiite relief and happiness at their defeat by the Israelis? I suggest that it is because the Shiites have inherited the heroic function Randal had once assigned to the PLO: they have now taken to arms and to terror against the Israelis. It is therefore permissible, and even important, to furnish the Shiites with the spine of resisters. Still, Randal's report does contain the elementary facts. The press critics, it would seem, have embarrassed the press.

ON THE MIDDLE EAST, *Time* has taken the rap for the whole pack. It's unseemly how the other media have rushed to offer up *Time* as the collective sacrifice for unprofessional practices of which just about every major journalistic institution was guilty. Of course, *Time* had the bad luck to defame a single individual who had legal standing in an American courtroom, while the others were content to defame a whole people. Still, the habits were the same: for six or seven years many press people were prepared to believe just about anything reflecting badly on the Jewish state (and, almost as a corollary, anything reflecting well on its enemies). This is why the folk at *Time* believed something so intrinsically implausible as the assertion that Ariel Sharon had advised the Gemayel family to commit a massacre of Palestinians (as if a massacre in that country at that time, even one perpetrated by the Phalange, would do other than harm to Israel, the Israeli army, and Sharon himself). This is why, during the Lebanon war, we were fed from various usually reliable sources preposterously false casualty figures and news of a vacuum bomb that sucked up buildings and reports of a firestorm in Beirut, and on and on—and not just about the war. This credulousness extended to every area of Israeli life and behavior, and it was the mother of invention. The Sharon-*Time* litigation has put a chill on it; and if that is what it takes, so be it.

MORT KONDRACKE called me last week to ask whether I'd ever criticized ABC anchorman Peter Jennings in print. I told him I didn't think I had, though it's possible. And there surely had been occasions when I wished I had. The first time I ever remember being conscious of Jennings at all was in September 1972, only hours after the murder by Palestinian terrorists of the Israeli Olympic athletes in Munich. Jennings came on the tube, quite cool about the victims but, as I recall, eager to explain the act from the victimizers' point of view: the massacre was a demonstration of the misunderstood and desperate Palestinians' frustration at an unappeased grievance—as if they had not had from the beginning the option of a negotiated compromise for peace. With authoritatively clipped speech and a mannequin-handsome face, I thought, here was someone whose banalities were destined to be with us for years. I don't watch "World News Tonight" regularly enough to know how Jennings's editorial hand affects ABC's banality quotient. But I've just read a report in *The Harvard Crimson* of a forum at the Harvard Law School, entitled "U.S.-Soviet Relations: A View from the Media," at which Jennings was the featured speaker. Here too he was eager to explain the world from the adversary's point of view, but with so many clichés that I hardly wonder why ABC News is on the way down. Jennings is upset by the current chill in U.S.-Soviet relations. Some of this he traces to misunderstandings, as, for example, Americans not grasping the Russians' "deep abiding passion for security." O.K., so we'll try to understand this passion better. What do we do about Soviet aggression now that we know better why they aggress? Misperceptions explain a lot to Jennings—too much. But what about the realities of deep and abiding differences in values, and about what is permissible and what is not? Jennings also believes that biases prevalent among the American people have adversely affected the U.S.-Soviet connection. That's one thing that can't be said about the biases of the Russian people, which don't affect much of anything. Still, Jennings thinks our media underestimate the happiness of the Soviet people. "We imply that the Soviet leadership has failed its people. But many of their promises were kept since the revolution." Of course, many promises, even on the most rudimentary material level, have not been kept. And do we underestimate the happiness of the Polish people or the Czechs or the Afghans? Or don't they matter? How about explaining history from their point of view?

M.P.

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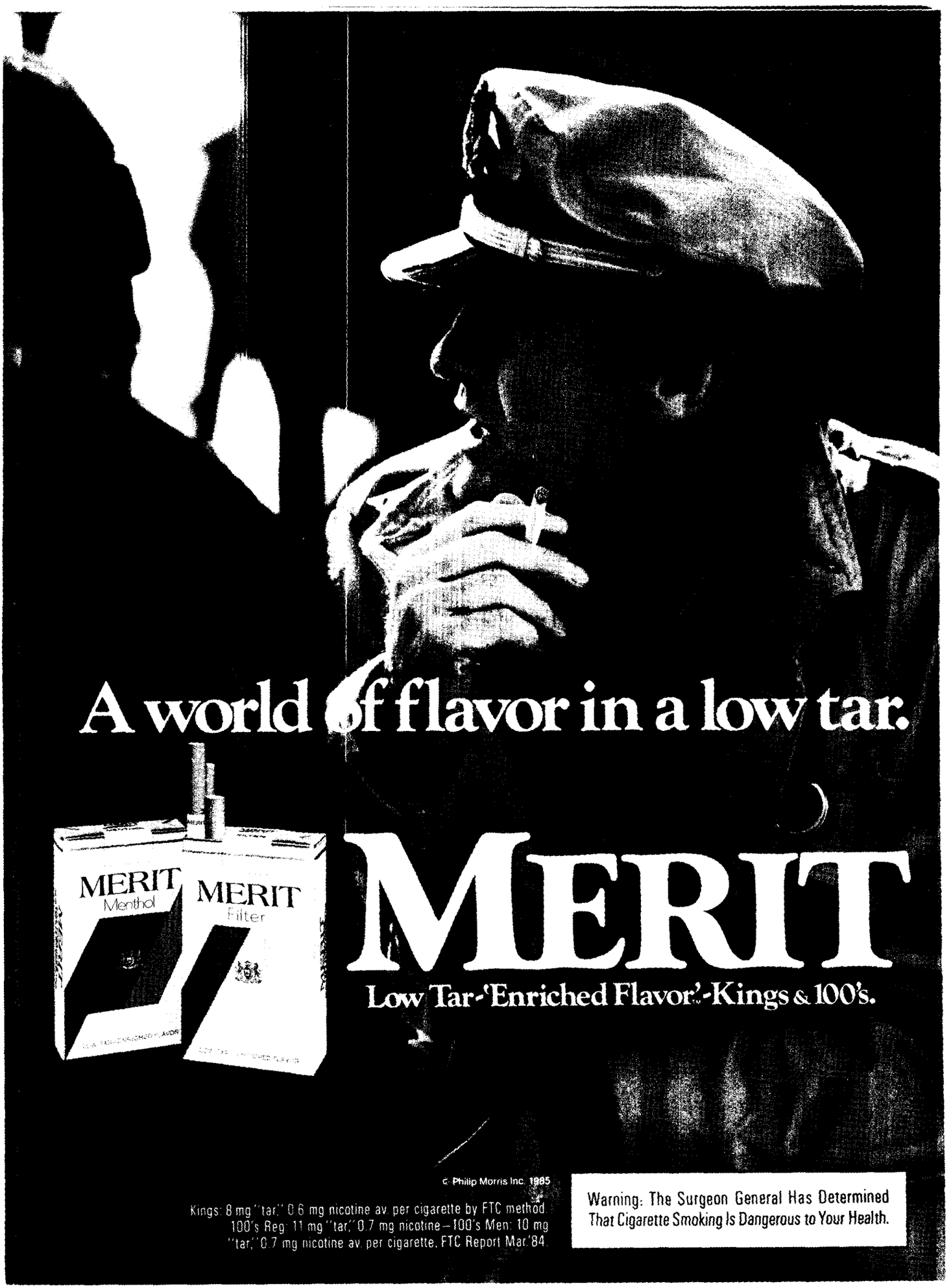

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turmoils are contained. We start in a cottage on the Maine coast, then move to (and because it is the scene of her past, revisit) an Iowa farmhouse on the inland sea, then to an apartment on Manhattan island. Each is a marginal existence, a fugitive vision. The book opens with "A Baroque Sunburst," ends at nightfall, and in between flicker images of light and dark. Those images, along with a crosshatching of allusions and themes and its bracing structure, give this book an especially vivid sense of unity and direction.

A CHARACTERISTIC narrative device for this poet is the ramble, during which unconsidered trifles are snatched up as emblems. For a reader of *The Kingfisher*, Clampitt's new (or resumed) walks in Maine, along its bogs and tidal flats, and her plucky city adventures offer familiar pleasures. The opening of "Low Tide at Schoodic" can stand in for her method—one that owes a good deal to Marianne Moore—whereby abstractions and images are allegorically heaped on the plain object of meditation:

> Force, just here, rolls up
> pomaded into vast blue curls
> fit for the Sun King, then crumples
> to a stuff of ruffs and kerchiefs
> over ruined doorposts, the rubble
> of an overflow no one remembers
> except through cooled
> extrapolation—tunnels
> underneath the granite,
> the simmering moat, the darkened sill
> we walk on now,
> prowling the planar windowpanes of
> tidepools
> for glimpses of kelp's ribboned whips,
> the dead man's fingers.

This new book also includes versions of *The Kingfisher*'s more ambitious poems. Poems here about the death of Clampitt's brother echo earlier poems about her parents; the title poem, about the death at sea of a Maine fisherman and how "the iridescence/of his last perception, charring, gave way to unreversed,/irrevocable dark," is a muted echo of her more anguished and searching poem "The Dahlia Gardens." But these new poems—"Black Buttercups" and "A Curfew" particularly—have a more urgent, personal, and thereby more affecting note to them. The title poem reminds us "that what you love most is the same as what you're/most afraid of—God,/in a word." It is love that draws Clampitt's essentially religious sensibility to the world's "wallowing and glitter," and it is fear that pulls her back from a vision of that world as a version of dark, unknowable will.

THE book's literal and figurative centerpiece is "Voyages," a sequence of eight peoms subtitled "A Homage to John Keats," in part a costume drama drawn from Keats's letters and poems and from biographies of the poet. It is nearly impossible not to draw an appealing portrait of Keats. Even so, Clampitt's pastiche is strikingly successful, circling as it does Keats's "own recurring dream of being warm," of the "fine weather, health, Books, a contented Mind" that animated and eluded his short life. "Voyages" is also an extraordinary act of self-definition. The ways she identifies her own writing with Keats's—with his lush impetuosity, his taste for grandeur, his regard for the literature of the past as "a Refuge and a Passion"—are illuminating.

But with good reason she concentrates more on Keats's life than on his work, and previous poems in the book forge stronger links between the two poets. We think of Clampitt's dead younger brother when she speaks of Keats's beloved Tom. We think of her own early prairie life when Keats contemplates his brother George's emigration to the wilds of America. But it is not only the "continual allegory" of Keats's life that Clampitt is appropriating for herself as a way to make her turmoil lucid. She is interested, her footnote says, in "the powerful way in which literature can become a link with times and places, and with minds, otherwise remote." To that end, having joined herself to Keats, she enjoins a subsequent line of poets—Walt Whitman, Hart Crane, Wallace Stevens, and Osip Mandelstam—in which she means to take her place. Her daring here is, in Pound's phrase, to have gathered from the air a live tradition, her voice one with theirs:

> How clannish
> the whole hand-to-hand, cliffhanging
> trade,
>
> the gradual letdown, the hempen slither,
> precarious basketloads of sea drift
> gathered at Margate or at Barnegat:
> along Paumanok's liquid rim, the dirges,
> nostalgia for the foam: *the bottom of*
> *the sea is cruel*. The chaff, the scum
> of the impalpable confined in stanzas,

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a shut-in's hunger for the bodiless
enkindlings of the aurora—all that
traffic in the perilous.

"Life," remarked Wallace Stevens, "is not people and scene but thought and feeling." "Voyages" is both. It is a poem—indeed, this is a book—whose livelihood trades in character sketch and minutely observed setting, but whose life is what it thinks of them and how it invokes and quickens our feeling about them.

J. D. McCLATCHY

J. D. McClatchy, a poet and critic, teaches at Princeton University. His new collection of poems, *Stars Principal*, will be published next year by Macmillan.

MATZOH BALL SCOOP

Origins of the Seder: The Passover Rite and Early Rabbinic Judaism by Baruch M. Bokser

(University of California Press, 188 pp., $19.95)

Of all the practices of Judaism, the Passover seder remains the least effaced by assimilation. For Jews distant from religion by choice or by forgetfulness, the seder still occupies an important place. When invited they come, and moved by motives imperfectly understood, many conduct their own home rituals. Indeed, the fact that the seder happens at home makes its persistence even more remarkable. The seder is not a ritual whose existence is guaranteed by the institutional weight of synagogues and organizations or by the expertise of religious professionals. The seder is a quintessentially grass roots and unclerical affair, which depends on the will and initiative of individuals and families.

Moreover, despite the proverbial divisiveness of the Jewish community, no group seems to want to part with the seder or allow it to remain the exclusive possession of Orthodoxy. In Israel even antireligious kibbutzim have formulated their own seder rituals, and in America the Reform Movement has issued its own; and for those who decline to tamper with the tradition, there are innumerable editions of the Haggadah, the written text of the service, glossed by commentaries of every conceivable ideology and outlook. As a visual document, the Haggadah continues to invite extensive artistic embellishment in the tradition of the illuminated Haggadahs of the Middle Ages, the glory of Jewish art. In short, the Passover seder has become the very figure of the tradition, *the* instance of the power of tradition not just to carry on but to renew itself in a secular age.

The impressive sway of great religious traditions like the seder is based on a kind of lie. In an age of dislocation and shopworn innovation, the promise made by tradition is to unlock a vista that reaches directly back to the ancient past—not to a pedantic classical antiquity but to a time of potent acts of foundation. The seder recalls the great foundation myth of the Jewish people, the liberation of Egyptian bondage, and it succeeds because rather than merely memorializing the exodus the seder stimulates a dramatic reenactment of the event. The lie in all of this is that unimpeded access to a time or to origins proffered by powerful rituals like the seder is in fact an illusion. The illusion of continuity was usually carefully orchestrated by generations of religious sages who, arriving on the scene much later, understood two things: both the need to create viable symbols for their times and the need to conceal their contemporary provenance in favor of an appeal to antiquity. They made fundamental changes, but worked diligently to ensure that these changes would appear as if they had been forever inscribed in the hoary and divine nature of things.

In the case of the seder, the complex issues surrounding the fabrication of this "timeless" ritual are neatly unpacked in a new study by Baruch Bokser. Although it displays wide learning in Jewish and Hellenistic sources, *Origins of the Seder* is clearly written and arranged to help the general reader follow the argument. Bokser reconstructs a particular historical moment in which the continuity of the Passover rite was put in jeopardy; he then tells the story of how the ceremony was altered in an effort to meet this threat, without the alteration being acknowledged.

In early biblical times Passover consisted of a communal meal held at twilight on a fixed day in the spring. Each household slaughtered a lamb and ate it together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and retold the story of the exodus. Later, when the Jerusalem Temple became the center of the national cult, the family meal became part of a pilgrimage festival. The slaughtering of the animals was taken over by the priests, and the ceremony was accompanied by the singing of psalms by choruses of Levites. Both early and late, the vital center of these observances, Bokser argues, was the Passover sacrifice: it reenacted the first Passover in which the Israelites smeared the blood of slaughtered animals on their doorposts to protect them from the retribution visited upon the Egyptians. Offering and partaking of the sacrifice reconfirmed a conviction of God's continued involvement with Israel's fate.

THE problem comes with the destruction the Temple in 70 C.E. and the cancellation of the national cult. With no temple there could be no sacrifices, and this included the Passover offering. Since this sacrifice was the essential act of the festival, the gesture upon which all the other symbols depended, what then could be left of Passover—and its theological reassurances—in its absence? The difficulty was exacerbated by the bloody suppression of the Bar Kockba rebellion in 135 C.E. and the conversion of the Jerusalem Temple by the Romans into a pagan shrine. Jews were vulnerable as well to the preachments of the early church, which cast Jesus as the paschal lamb and argued that salvation was now available only through belief in him.

The response to this crisis was mounted by the sages of early rabbinic Judaism and recorded in the Mishnah, the law code compiled in Palestine around the year 200. The Mishnah, which lays down the protocols of a

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Passover service ("seder" means order of doing), contains all the elements of the seder as we know it today but differs significantly from the biblical form of the observance. What the Mishnah does not do is reflect on the methods and motives for making these changes, nor does it own up to the fact that they *are* changes. Using the insights of anthropology and the history of religions, Bokser undertakes to reconstruct the inner drama of the rabbis' response to this crisis as they dismantled and reassembled the Passover ritual.

BOKSER'S analysis reveals the variety of ways, some small and some large, the rabbis compensated for the sacrifice that had stood at the center of the ceremony. To begin with, the rabbis bypassed the great pilgrimage gatherings of recent memory and reached back to pre-temple times to emphasize the seder as a family meal independent of a national cult. The centrality of the sacrifice itself was underplayed by elevating the status of the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread (the matzoh), and making the three together the main symbols of the holiday. The very sufficiency of symbolism and narrative became another crucial assertion. It was enough, the rabbis claimed, to perform symbolic gestures and tell the story of the Passover. The actual performance of the sacrifice was no longer necessary to do God's will.

The kind of telling the rabbis had in mind, moreover, was not a simple recital of the biblical events. They called for an interpretive probing of the biblical texts, which took the form of an active intellectual exchange among adults and a pedagogic dialogue with children. Finally, as a way of refusing to give in to the demoralization induced by the recent destruction, the rabbis underscored the festivity of the holiday. Although psalms of thanksgiving had been sung in the Temple only by professional singers, now the singing of praises (the Hallel) was opened to and required of all Jews. Drinking wine, the symbol of joy, was similarly encouraged and formalized into four ritual cups—at the same time as the sacred celebration of the seder was distinguished from the abandonment of the symposia of Greco-Roman culture.

The creation of the seders told by Bokser is a story of subtlety and resourcefulness in which the early rabbis toil to rescue and restructure a central institution of Judaism that was threatened. The significance and the degree of the threat, however, remain a point of debate. Bokser's account of the origins of the seder is part of a current scholarly controversy, at the basis of which is the question: Should the emergence of classical Judaism be understood as a response to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple? Those who say no argue that since the elements of classical Judaism were already in place before 70 C.E., the destruction of the Temple, while a blow, was nevertheless integrated into a process of development already begun. The other position, advocated by the prolific historian Jacob Neusner of Brown University and illustrated by Bokser's work on the seder, interprets the destruction as a loss of titanic proportions, for which the program of the rabbis arose as a compensation. The issue is not trivial, because it is the Judaism produced by the rabbis at this time that became the religious civilization of the Jews until the modern period. Nor is it of small consequence if the origins of one of the world's major religions can indeed be said to lie in a response

AQUARIUM

The trigger fish and painted queens
add curves to their everlasting circuits
to avoid the woman working in the aquarium.

Blue SCUBA tanks striped with yellow
lightning bolts, red fins, orange gloves,
black skin, transform her into a species,

gerry-rigged, though a patch of tan skin
between calf and thigh, like the cutaway
in a diagram, shows human tendon and muscle

flexing as she pedals, wipes the aquarium
glass with a cloth or dusts mottled armatures
of fake coral with a long bootbrush.

Behind her mask her eyes are clear and dry,
but ringed with black mascara. Larger,
lighter, than our grounded selves who wave

to her, she waves to us, spits her mouthpiece
out, smiles, and pulls a glove off with her
teeth, then fits it to the air hose that bubbles

like a drowning man's garbled pleas. The glove
fills, expanding with the mixture of what
she breathes to keep herself alive, and rises

like a blowfish. Disturbed perhaps to be seen
by what we see, unconsciously we hold our breath
and wait until the woman returns the mouthpiece

to her mouth before we exhale, letting go
the bubbles of our wonder and fear
of the world behind glass which we press against

to follow the woman's upward swim as she retrieves
the glove that bobs orange and optically fat
like a cloud in the aquarium's watery sky.

MICHAEL COLLIER

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to a catastrophic historical event.

The objection put to the catastrophe thesis is that nowhere in its vast encyclopedic reaches does the Mishnah acknowledge this progam or betray the least hint of an anxiety about the viability of Judaism in a world without a temple. The proponents of the thesis point to just this silence, this supposed serenity, as the greatest confirmation both of their position and of the genius of the rabbis. Alarmed at the effect the loss would have on the people, the rabbis *made believe* that there had been no rupture, and that the institutions they created or adapted had always existed.

As an explanation, this act of suppression remains a conjecture; the debate is still open. Still, it is a fascinating idea, and one that goes some way toward accounting for how traditions originate in untraditional practices and why fictions are sometimes necessary to give these new traditions power and secure their acceptance.

ALAN MINTZ

Alan Mintz is director of the Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Maryland. He is the author of *HURBAN: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature.*

THE NEW REPUBLIC'S BEST BOOKS

Following is a list of books TNR *has recently reviewed and recommends.*

Small World by David Lodge (Macmillan). Good times with globe-trotting literary professors. (Reviewed 4/15/85)

The War Diaries of Jean-Paul Sartre: November 1939-March 1940 translated by Quintin Hoare (Pantheon). Portrait of the intellectual as a young man. (4/15/85)

Putting Up with the Russians: Commentary and Criticism, 1947-84 by Edward Crankshaw (Elizabeth Sifton/Viking). Essays from a sage Sovietologist. (4/15/85)

Pierre Mendès France by Jean Lacouture, translated by George Holoch (Holmes & Meier). Portrait of a paradoxical political career. (4/8/85)

Shah of Shahs by Ryszard Kapuściński, translated by William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) A tale of tyranny, set in Iran. (4/8/85)

Louise Bogan: A Portrait by Elizabeth Frank (Knopf). The tragic life of a sternly lyric poet, masterfully composed. (3/25/85)

Benjamin Constant and the Making of Modern Liberalism by Stephen Holmes (Yale University Press). A valuable study of a complex liberal thinker. (3/25/85)

Henry Purcell in Japan: Poems by Mary Jo Salter (Knopf). An impressive first collection reveals a wise voice and a widely traveling eye. (4/8/85)

Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement by James Farmer (Arbor House). Recollections of a turbulent time. (4/1/85)

Continental Drift by Russell Banks (Harper & Row). Characters and their crimes and dreams unfold on a large canvas. (4/1/85)

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

cies, characteristic of recession in developed countries, have not allowed debtor nations' export earnings to increase, thus producing this illiquidity crunch.

The depreciation of the dollar alone would ease debt-service burdens by making dollars less expensive to buy. A lower dollar would also stimulate world demand, and if markets were opened export earnings would rise to ease the illiquidity crisis in Latin America. Cutting off credit to Latin America will only hasten "undevelopment" and does not address the real problems fueling the debt crisis.

DAMIEN P. BROUILLARD
Arlington, Virginia

'FORTRESS AMERICA' FOLLY

To the editors:

Charles Krauthammer's timely rejoinder to the new isolationism ("Isolationism, Left and Right," March 4) is too generous to "left isolationism" in discerning mere incoherency; and it is insufficiently critical of "right isolationism" in conceding to it a "powerful" logic. "Fortress America" would be no less a folly than an excessive "multilateralism" would be a betrayal of the value of liberty.

PAUL R. HINLICKY
Garfield, New Jersey

A SHE-ITE WRITES

To the editors:

I was contentedly scanning "Heroin and Cowardice" (The Editors, February 25) when I suddenly ran into a statement that caused me to stop and cheer out loud. Referring to a politician in the third person, TNR used the pronoun "she"—a small but significant act acknowledging women's growing participation in political life. Kudos to TNR for advancing the cause of equality, with both its actions and its words.

CHERYL PILATE
Wichita, Kansas

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Bash

ON MARCH 12 France voted in favor of a typically grotesque U.N. Security Council resolution condemning Israel for its actions in Southern Lebanon. Britain, Denmark, and Australia had the decency to abstain. Only the United States had the courage to vote no, despite Shiite threats of violent retaliation against Americans. The French vote was more than just posturing. It had consequences, dangerous ones, for the United States. Had France and a couple of other countries abstained, the resolution would have fallen short of the nine votes needed for passage and the United States would have been spared the need to veto. As it happened, after the vote the United States had to rush some elements of the Sixth Fleet off the Lebanese coast to evacuate threatened Americans from Beirut. So it must have come as a surprise to the French government—which thought it had taken out insurance against just this sort of thing—when, ten days later, Shiite terrorists in Beirut kidnapped three French diplomats. A terrorist communiqué explained that one of the Shiite grievances is a French arms deal with the Saudis to swap planes for oil. The French want Saudi oil, Saudi money, and Saudi goodwill. The problem is that Shiite fanatics want the Saudis discomfited or dead. Saudi Arabia supports Iraq, which is at war with Iran, which is Mecca to Beirut's Shiite terrorists. Appeasement just isn't what it used to be. The French were better at it in the old days, but it was so much easier then. It had a single address—Berlin—and a single, though ever lengthening, list of demands. In the Middle East, the problem is how to propitiate all the appeasees simultaneously. A problem no doubt now under intense study at the Quai d'Orsay.

COLUMNIST ROBERT NOVAK, a man of great smallness, explains George Will's enormous influence by saying that Will is on the "bloody tube" all the time. Not quite. Will was influential long before he teamed up with Sam Donaldson, and for a simple reason: his writing is so good. He is consistently sharp, invariably interesting, and original. Before Will, there simply was no Burkean sensibility in the American political consciousness—how many have read Russell Kirk? Ah, but now the high Tory is on television every night, and has become a big target. It seems we are in for a spot of Will-bashing. Fair enough. Anyone who achieves celebrityhood should expect the slings and arrows of outraged unfortunates. Like *The Washington Weekly*, which recently gave Will its Pompous Pontificator award. It's an old trick for the young to inflate themselves by chucking mudballs at the mighty. But, kids, a dash of humility, please. If you can find one paragraph of writing in any four issues of *The Washington Weekly* to match Will's weight and balance (let alone elegance), it's an extraordinary month for the *Weekly*. Still, it's a venerable tradition for adolescents to stand on the shoulders of giants and pee down their trousers. Very Newtonian, very Porky.

A CONSERVATIVE Will-bash appears in the current issue of *National Review*. There is an opening aside disdaining Will's "ostentatious embrace of the Welfare State," which "endeared Will to the editors of *The New Republic*." Strike one, by association. Then the charge that Will is a closet Straussian, which, even more heretical, makes him a kind of Hegelian. (Would a Hegelian write a twice-weekly column? No matter.) Strike two, on doctrine. Then, the heart of the argument: insufficient reverence for our basic political arrangements. Will is critical of the Founders' devotion to individual liberty at the expense of individual virtue. Bad, says *National Review*: "In a good regime [America], anything that tends to lessen our reverence for our Founding Fathers must therefore be looked upon with wise suspicion, particularly when the conclusion of the argument is not to acknowledge their unsuspected or at any rate predominant goodness, but instead to urge us to become wards of some foreign uncle [Burke] of dubious character." This is the second unfortunate use this year of the word "uncle." And a third strike against Will, for filial impiety. At this point the author, Charles Kesler, adds the silly charge that, having debunked the American public philosophy, Will wants to establish in its place "the spirit of capitalism" as the organizing, energizing American political principle. Now, although ideologizing capitalism is the project of some neoconservatives, the one person of whom it is absurd to say this is Will, who makes his anticapitalist bias very clear. The real objection is to Will's "project of importing . . . 'European' conservatism into America." And that is exactly what Will has done. One can understand some native American conservatives being rather xenophobic about the project. I think it is a cause for celebration and for some congratulation. Almost single-handedly, and from outside the academy, Will has injected an entire political tradition, Burkean conservatism, into everyday American political discourse. For me, it is a quintessentially American act: adding yet another philosophic faction (and a humane and important one) to contend in the public square. I doubt it will sap our vital bodily fluids.

THIS IS AS FAR as I had gotten in this column last week, when I was felled, on deadline day for the Diarist, by a particularly nasty bug. So I'm a week late. What should pop up in the space I was supposed to fill but yet another example of Will-bashing. Since we are being praised far and wide for our free-wheeling, open, tolerant, etc., style, and since Will-bashing is my subject—one more word. Last week's Diarist had several complaints against Will, but most of all he doesn't like Will's style. He doesn't like his study, his books, his artifacts, his mementos, because these things smack to him of pretentious Anglophilia. Well, I don't think it is pretentious for, say, an American Jew like me or last week's Diarist to adorn his office with Israeli books, artifacts, and memorabilia. What is wrong with surrounding oneself with tokens of one's scholarly interests and philosophical commitments? The man who introduced Toryism to American political discourse likes to work under Cardinal Newman's gaze. Let's talk about his ideas.

C.K.

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Stan Blossom, Sun Company district engineer, with his son, Tony, fishing off Hillhouse drilling rig in the Santa Barbara Channel.

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